

Otoliths

issue fifty-three, part one

southern autumn, 2019

Otoliths
edited by Mark Young

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FAR BACK AS A RAILROAD starting from outhouse to forever

Stretches this struggle.

Syllable by syllable.

Glistening grains of opium in your wings my work angels

Sings

Narcotic?

Never:

Nerves glowing

The way for a while I was haunted by a German woman:

Her silhouette, profile alone

Seductive by her dark voice.

When it came to the finer things—

What was missing I cannot name;

I put my finger on it:

We were a ward of weeping, not tears by stumps.

Child amps.

Not war amps but survivors

Of amputations

Separated from the paralytic children.

So surprising so peculiar an event

Like topping on a birthday cake of a twelve year old:

She touches & it is gone

Far back a railway station stretches this grief

Beyond binding

Up in sheaves yet is brilliant out its message like the alien corn.

SHE NOW MAKES EUROPE HER PLAYGROUND

Smokers stubbing out cigarettes in streets.

Audiences more receptive in the bars & swings /swigs

Of bourbon her voice her slinky body links of mesh &
water:

What am I doing in this sleepy province?

Born girl-crazy.

She sings, Hannigan, of

The moment, musically, of the beginning of the century

Decadent, the ending of things; Kurt, Mahler.

I turn over ash roses

& racing heart propels me out of doors, swollen cheek or not.

She is giving concerts no jacket required

About the German girl that dark pearl, who loved me “totally” for
a few months

that language cannot assuage any grief:

I shuddered at German as a child when I heard in the street

Still shuddering

Turning toward / from

Love / hate:

Luminous, dark, coal cay, amber night.

FAR BACK AS A RAILROAD its roundhouse near the brickworks,
By turns elegy
& praise,
brooding
& psalm,
if childhood was a slammer—who ever promised the moon?
A wooden, wordless feeling: a love for uncommonly loved things.
Like weaving wool the hands weave pain
The weaver unseen.
Sun sets thru our Dutch lace curtain
In a hundred year old house, the Tonkin house
Rafter of slanting oak
Beams lit like candles with sun-
Set a table for one: once set for two
That's what happened to my parents
The romance drained out
First the flowers swept off the mirrory dining table
Then one-by-one candles blown out
Then the little girls
Till daddy left the big house in New Rochelle bought after the war
Sun set
Over the brickworks
Glowing red as a forge
Which always contains fire
A little alphabet of little things:
 Thrown to the dog, hitting concrete with the small hell that burns, then
rings.

BLACK WATCH / NIGHT WATCH

Two clock hands ticking, hearts like quietly loaded bombs.
Our visions braided: chestnut & blond.
Typing in "Sunday's Child" I cast a wide net
Knowing I break open to let the real person out.
I smell the heating coils in our own home:
Early warning systems fail
In our black watch nightgowns side-by-side we welcome sleep.

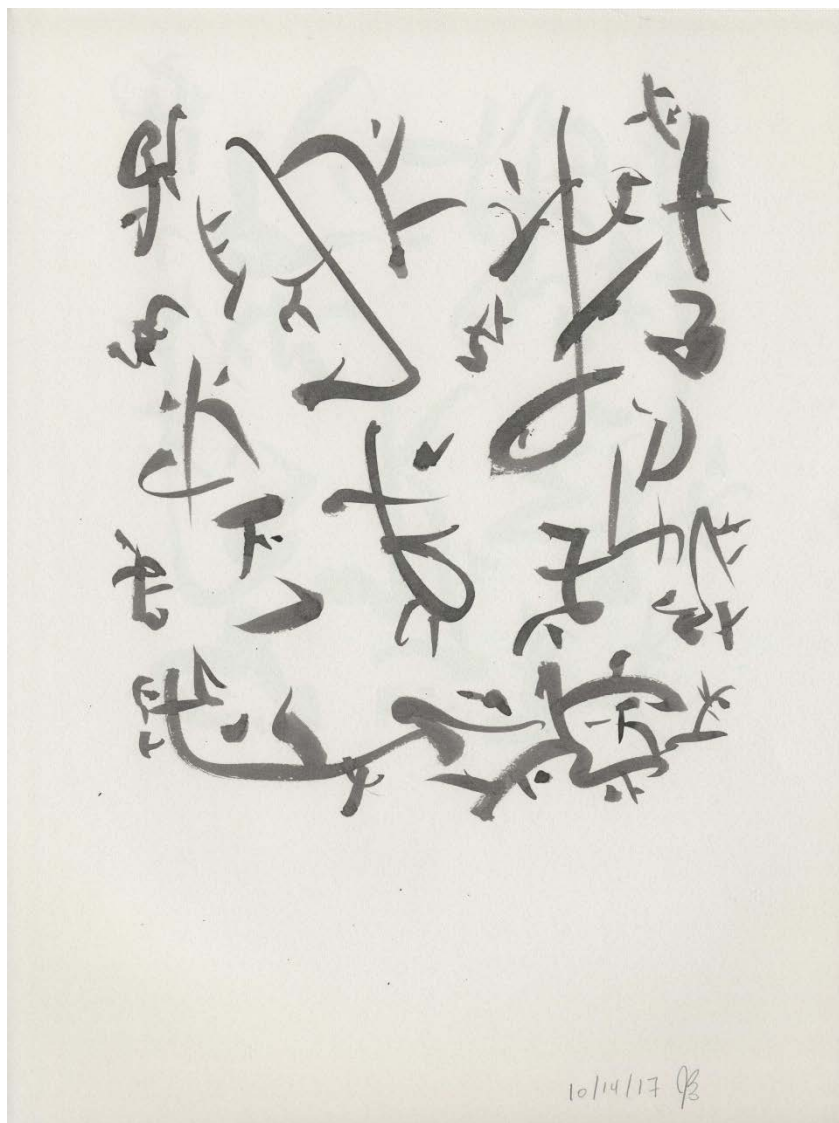
PINCHING PENNIES the brass rubs off on my heart, my soul
My documents official
Technical writer, please
Transcribe these Sunday evening thoughts for me into wings
Crewel-work, more cruel
Cancer looked at under the microscope
Never up to now did I feel more desolate up north in Canada
Frustration level shot thru the ceiling:
My skate-key had been confiscated because mother was chagrined:
My eldest childhood friend, with leukemia now, living cell-count to cell-count
Spent whole days sobbing
But loved being 80 & a grandmother:
She'd battled her mattress
The topper burst
Which she flung on the floor up there in New England
But she had a wretched night's sleep.
Now all is pearl. Sunday
I wish this, that weren't happening
Yet the sense of portals being open
One flinging one's arms like a windmill
A silver-nitrate pool of evening
I was riding trains to the great beyond:
Beyond the brass
Beyond trying to reach everyone
 In a more vernacular American speech, that of the Ozarks, the Blue
Mountains, North Car'lina
 Where Annie Flynn rose from her creche & I paid your fee in lamb skin: an
ice-transcription.

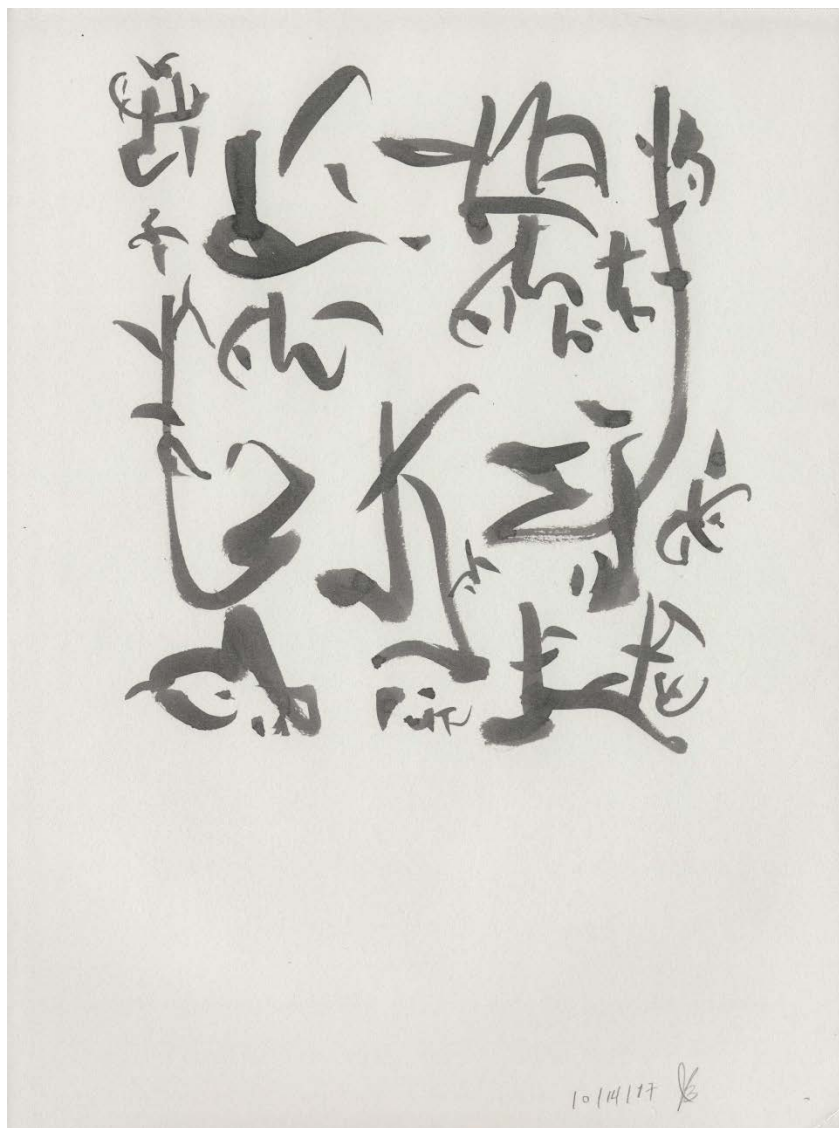
STRIPPED TO NEAR NOTHING the dark complications of life set in.
Not all my circumstance is dark: but this set in ivory even recedes, rather than
glows:
I was nine, ten
Mother had confiscated my skate key
Due to misbehavior.
Where was it hidden? I looked in the vegetable bin
I looked in the bone ivory convolutions of my brain, the white cases which are
the skull.
Ocean tides kept rippling up & down my rib cage
Now they purred like a cat
Low ripped like a swan thru rough waters,
a swan whose wings turned to serrated saw blades & cut the fish beneath
Cut no chase for me
Who stopped dead on the head of a coin
The morning I was paralyzed
Turning into evening
Chancing from vertical girl to prone:
Now miracles slowly, like twilight, seeped in.
Not the cherished twilight of the fairy tale doll in rainbow colors swishing in
taffeta,
Her breath, her invisible dreams, imagined breath set the ripples moving the
skirt
Now skate keys were superfluous as skate keys:
I might as well have thrown them to the dogs or swans:
Or burnt this to a crisp, charred keys which would open nothing.

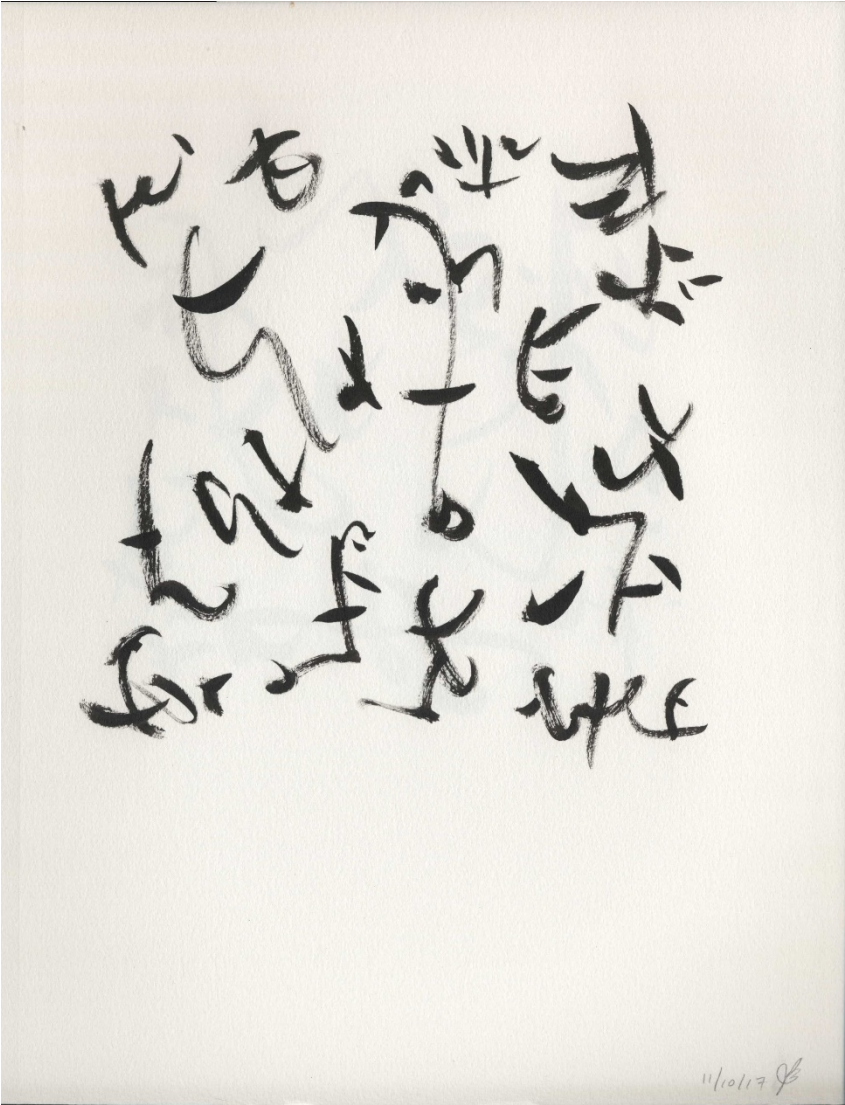
Jeff Bagato

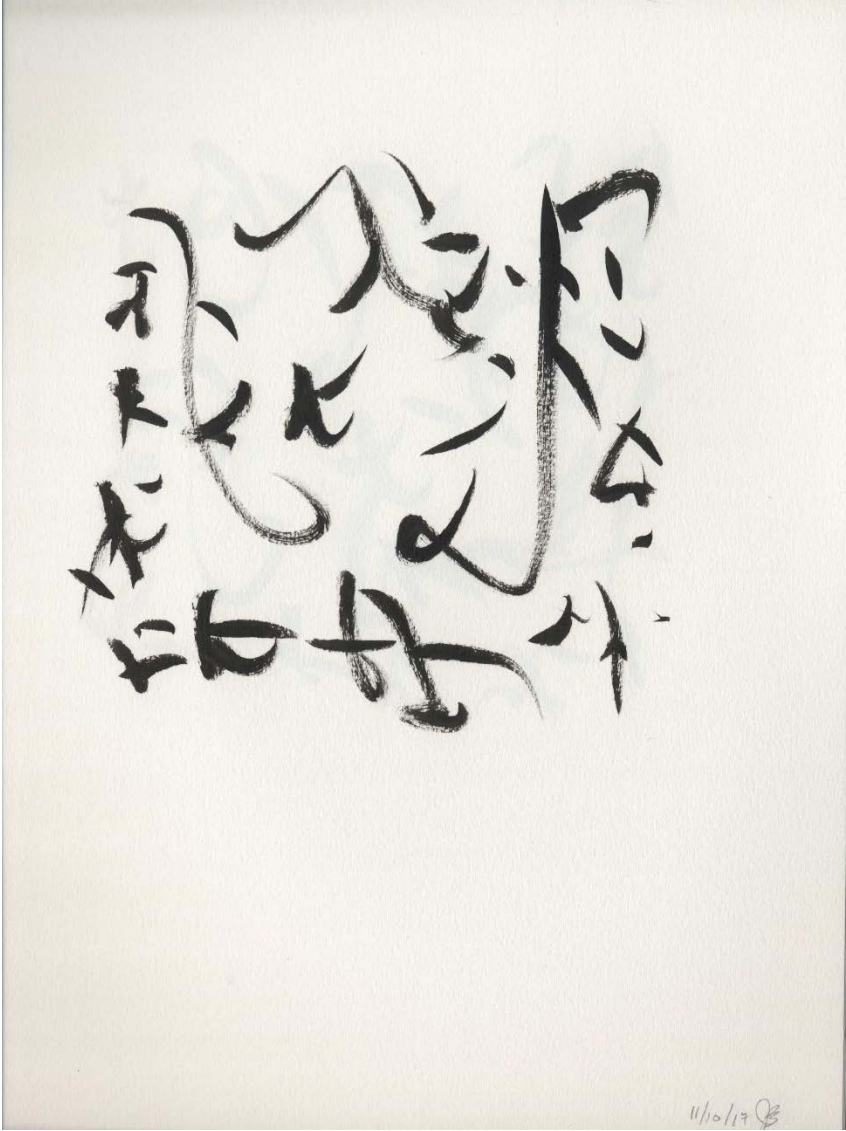
Five Asemic Poems











Flip Operations II

flit

flit

flue fleece flume flunk

flue flavor flare flirt

flit flit

flit flit

flip flock flock flock flour flour fluid flag fleece flume flunk

flip fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flip flaw

flip flaw flab

flax flock

flax flour

flax fluid

flock fling fling fling fling fling

flex flock fling

flog flock fling fling fling

flaw flog

flog flock fling fling fling fling

flop flog

flip flock flock flock flag fleece flume flunk

flip flap

flip flap

flip flew

flip flew

flax flour

flax flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flog flour fling fling fling fling

flaw flog

flog flour fling fling fling fling fling

flaw flog flab

fly flab

flu flab

flip flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flax flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flog flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flat flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flaw flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling

flax flour

flax flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flax flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flog flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flex flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flux flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flea flux flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 fly flea
 flog flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flap flog
 flip flour fling fling fling fling fling fling flag fleece flume flunk
 flap flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flap flour flip
 flap flour flip
 flax fluid
 flux fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling
 flex fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flab flex
 fly flab
 flux fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flax fluid
 flax fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flay fluid fling
 flay fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flaw flog fling
 flay fluid fling
 flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flay flay fluid fling
 flaw flay flay fluid fling
 flue flagon flirt float
 flit flagon flirt float
 flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flu flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flog fluid fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling fling flagon flirt float
 flap flag
 flap flag
 flub flap flag flagon flirt float
 fly flub
 fly flub
 flew
 flee fleece flume flunk
 flee

flee
 flit
 flit flour flour flour
 flip flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flaw flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flay flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 fly flay
 flaw flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flay flour fling fling fling fling fling fling fling
 fly flay
 flap flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flip flour flour flour fling fling fling fling fling fling flag flagon flirt float
 flap flip flour flour flour fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flap flip
 flap flip
 flit
 flit
 flit flock flock flock flock flock
 flog flock fling fling fling fling
 flap flog flock fling fling fling fling
 flog flock flock flock flock flock fling fling fling fling flag flagon flirt float
 flap flog
 flap flog
 flit
 flit flail flail
 flip flail fling fling fling
 flop flail fling fling
 flaw flail fling fling
 flap flail fling fling fling
 flip flail flail flail flag flavor flare flirt
 flap flip
 flap flip
 flit
 flit
 flit flesh flesh flesh flesh flesh
 flax flesh fling
 flesh fling fling fling fling fling fling
 flog flesh fling fling fling
 flap flesh fling fling fling
 flip flesh flesh flesh flesh flesh flag flavor flail flirt
 flap flip
 flap flip
 flew

flew
flee flavor flail flirt
flee flagon flirt float
flee
flee

Note.

"Flip Operations II" continues Jeff Bagato's series of experiments imitating the communication of AI machines, using a limited vocabulary with specifically assigned semantic values. This is actually a short story describing brief business transactions between negotiating robots.

Clouds.

some rounds of wind around
it's 4:30 somewhere
as i watch some clouds getting a bit of sun
the cafes erode the air with the entrails of coffee
the town clock all three faces telling different times
which late do you want!

January lazing about even the shadows are lax
everything seems perfectly vague
if an ant had a tantrum it would be noticed!
now that the wind is relaxed
the air hangs about gathering dust

i'm still watching the sun bake some clouds
nothing panics the day
it would lead us anywhere
and does

one cloud has had too much sun and faints
where's the smelling salts?
rousing a cloud could be stormy
and this might be the perfect day for it!

Residuals.

touches of February out on the horizon
thinking up a fine entrance
while watching January play out the last few days
nearly as mysterious as a hay bail in a field
or am i just exaggerating again?
while everything goes mulching along at a pleasant rate

like the tips of icebergs
residuals are mostly what is seen or heard
almost normal fermenting away under our eyes
totally unavoidable seeping into the future
or for as long as you are watching

one partition leaning on another
the first few days of February
seems to have wandered by incognito
mulching along at a pleasant rate
all nicely wrapped up

More Shadows An Ant And Lunch.

so this is summer throwing shadows under the chair
where an ant walks distracted enough at the casualness of shadows
on the move in a dusty continual manner right out past the edges
of the known presence that just hangs about compounding
its remnants as if it had some charm or wiliness or bluster
just sort of wallows on and on will there ever be a point where
it all adds up a notion maybe we could never have an idea about

i should sweep the build up of leaves or at some point soon
we won't get into the house though maybe i'll wait 'till the ant crosses
a few more shadows as i sit here quietly minding my do nothings
the ant seems to stay between two shadows taking in some sun
like i am doing while the morning eagerly clamors towards lunch
which i'll only get to if i sweep the leaves the shadows of lunch grow
unheeded i'm swept up in it lunch laid out coffee bread and fine jams
nice to know someone in this part of the universe who makes fine jams

Conversation Piece.

nice day for the gnats
the air humming along
i first thought it was an industrial noise
a very excitable dialogue goes on
as if the answer was some way off
skirting the edge of mayhem
by the rancour maybe the original
question is forgotten tipped
out on the other side of mayhem

YOUR HAND INSIDE THE MIRROR

Beginnings. It was true, something was different. The white sun of the New Year smiled upon your city. She was a person of many questions. In the night she sat in stillness. The blue mists of the future, a dream of silk poured from your head. Dry days, & still these quiet longings. I wanted only a warm well-lit room to ponder. Plum blossoms. Your hand inside the mirror, the mirror inside your hand. It was a reflection in the mountains. Yet she sat by you, inquisitive. A sober minded friend in the hours of loneliness. You listened to Jazz in the evening. By the waters of Nazareth, the sun's eye gazed upon the people. But tell me, did they wish you a happy New Year?

THE BIRD THAT DREAMS IN A SHELL

Bell of silent mornings, bird of the fires that is born each moment. The world swirls under you. You of the neglected & cast aside. We talk quietly in the evening, & the bird of a flame shell sings its lament. This celebration of ecstasies, this bell of distances & the warmth of holding her in my arms. We live for this awakening, a night fire in the hall. Call of the bird that dreams in a shell, broken yet whole. From which it escapes each moment the world song swims, distance wrapped in a blanket of silk. You see her in a vision of dry chambers. The candle burns in a cloud of ghosts that cry in atmospheres of silt. Patient for their golden hour of ancient grapes & love.

RAINS CONTINUE & I MUST CHANGE

Silent space of desolation. Rain in the morning window jettisons through the sky. Organic coffee that tastes of dried figs & bananas. I swim in the night, a fish in lucid waters. But I must come down from these lofty expectations. Proust is with me, & V shines a flashlight into the darkness of my soul. Dreams unending, to wake in quiet despair. The night a fraction of the earthlight that sings desolation. Lost lucence that skims the fringe of the waves. Rains continue & I must change. I feel a faint suction in night despondency, a whim that leads me to some revelation. I wanted to live, to feel cool currents coursing through my soul. When all was said & done, I was there.

WHEN SHE CALLS MY NAME

In silent mornings, what does it take to be free? Etched in the sky, the name of the lovers, & these slow births in dry hours. Music. Evening sprawls out into horizons of silt, & she is beside you, your familiar. The coffee is fresh & thick. Those questions that come to you in half dream. Some quiet surrender of the day sinks down, & you wait amongst the saints. Your time has not yet come. Savior of the dog day years. The sun swollen rolls through the gates of dream logic, swims in the coffee cup of your futures. "One day I will stay by silent sunshine," she said after she had read your poem. Initiations in the dark, a green light drifts somewhere familiar, beyond the red rivers.

LET BREATHING BE YOUR ANCHOR

Life enters & is drawn along by a spool. The skies overcast, the coffee fresh. In this moment of repose we sit patient. It was a time of many holidays. This present moment in which we learn the Kanji for "partner." I feel the earth turning under me. Past & future is encompassed in the now. & here you question, the mornings grey O still this silence. You would like to know the name of the flowers that scatter about your feet. Rose petals, & snow falls outside. The night is a coin floating through thick clouds. In silent vespers you came, our dream a sequence of birds. Life a tiny globe, journeys in the mist. I feel the seasons pull, a force in the earth that calls.

THESE BEGINNINGS

Morning of silence. Group of elms that swirl in the distance. I feel the fatigue of dry days & celebrate this existence. Watch roses blow across the sidewalk. Autumn with its slow entropies, cycles of mist, ministry. I remain patient as the sun emerges, an enormous hand. This stillness, this in between we come to possess. Dreams, slightly faded the way a Proustian text is, words radiant yet illusive. I wait & stones siphon in white awakenings. I see a deer standing in the park. My life a gridwork of stars, deep night. Listless & warm. I watch a sentry in the clouds.

Five Twenties

Polyamorous Pearl-Handled Olfactory Dog

Gaping gorge Oregon sandpiper sneeze
dwarf symphony wheelhouse roundkick
shuffle feint parlor distraction district
clockwork organism schism detection

Polyamorous snowflake paramedic
antihistamine duffel bag hat trick
bong carburetor mechanic oil can
squirrel nut zipper tertiary pump

Dog hair festival sneeze acrobat
clown president cartwheel carnival
candied apple apostrophe currant
chromium beef tinsel manufacturer

Olfactory worker assembling ols
ancient pump Dionysian elf king
time-travelling bird orchestration
Gulf of Tonkin restaurant of despair

Pearl-handled spandex-removal gadget
purple-sequinned construction overalls
Captain Timothy's tremendous ant farm
the ancient epic of Gilda's mess

Athletic Howard: Greased Married Gnostic

Greased palm-reading entitlement clause
jump and wave western yodel technique
sonnet tunnel appreciation sofa
satellite fur space vest accelerator

Howard pulse teardrop giggle storm television
chromium burn ban bumper pile raft
tough snout arachnid cheater desk alert
nuclear proliferation deterrent hose

Athletic determination biscuit
survival manual feather duster section
illuminati bargain bin decoder ring
barstool prophet last call philosophy

Gnostic bubble bath hip now woke
saxophone melodrama bass 'n' drums
sonic ecological balance
quip parry sidestep shuffle grapple flip

Married to the mobius karmic loop
asleep on bus got off where got on
tried again slept again got off guess where
deja vu it could happen to you if

Orange Henny Carnegie History

Henny Youngman Gary Oldman
maintenance fee secondary eleven Jack cost
Eraserhead now erase 'er neck start over
Pontius Pilate this is your captain speaking

"Get you high at night" "special island"
Long Beach Road way back when someone else
waves jetties Little Neck clams Oceanside dump
peat bog flounder fishing water skiing

Orange jelly Flaming Lips Screaming Trees
Screamin Jay Hawkins Screamin Cheetah Wheelies
green felt marker upside down cake mock tudor
teacher's aid band practice perfect excuse

Carnegie Hall Monty Halls of Montezuma
shores of Tripoli aisles of trials
Miles Smiles Blue Train Monk Plays Monk
hermit her bat her ball her bases

History hysterectomy hertz Ben Hur
genuflect speckled hen horticulture graft
Percival's purse is full it's personal
Personism Frank O'Hara New York City

Purple Geothermal Dancing Hirsute

Hirsute his dress their cacophony
telemetric dunce cap gun barrel lid
pig fire reign gunk alert noodle siren
ghost ship maxillary nerve spasm generator

Geothermal oxymoron snack break
destination GPS malfunction
quiz show host animal cracker barrel
Harpo Marxist theory of evolution

Dancing with the star spangled banter
slide rule of thumb drive the goddamn car
Creeley evocative brevity lock
Kaufman's *The Ancient Rain* Corso's *Gasoline*

Near past distant past future primitive
human barbarity Mars and beyond
"there's a starman waiting in the sky"
David Ziggy James Iggy pre-punk glam pop

Purple shift of mood indigo twilight
sunset sunrise son of god mother of man
naked apes worldwide cocoon of gadgetry
find what you find in the ruins proceed

Auntie Wendy Goat Appletree Hobby

Hobby socialist denatured solvent
premature e-book publication
gooseberry pie Grandma Moses Red Sea
surfers snappers fiddler crabs Zero Mostel

Appletree sentry Yellow Brick Road
werewolf tse-tse thou lizard thou thunder full
lizards doff claws beak was beak was beak was
beak was beak was beak was oven plundered full sink of doves

Auntie Em antique elm let's play Twister
color film *Man on the Moon* Andy Kaufman
"here I come to save the day" Elvis
Taxi... *Driver* "you lookin at me"

Wendy O Williams school bus chainsaw
splatter chic gutter punk whipstitch rip away
flugelhorn dustbunny shoebox army
sea creature Uncle Squid Monty Pie Face

Goat fenders mate ghost nay bores
curse blistered cow strum cat mad knight I'm prey
sew mulch deep ends Upton who fed a sparrow
slathered with cheeseburgers beast-eyed thin white Chechens

Sanjeev Sethi

Skeins

Conduit is commuting at breakneck pace:
I'm amazed at its capacity. Poem by poem:
I'm surrendering to words. Sans a cage I
was confined to a curve, power of skin
and its control on channels. I handed
over much to sport. This speaks of body
and its obsecration. Hawkshaw within
may offer clarity.

Knuckle Sandwich

Guesstimates steer our advance and
sometimes it spreads into a whipsaw.
Does the cosmos release its signature
to every union? In which language?
How does one locate it? Is that why
many of us miss the spree? Let us
hear the hymn between us asking
to be born in the clucky affectation
of our confinement. An impresario
of stillborn liveliness isn't a fender
bender.

Stele

You have entered our consciousness as a member of the rogues' gallery collective. Bookworm from my all-male college is branded as the plunderbund's scuzzy senior. Media wrangles are half-done without you as exemplar. Your fingers which otherwise key elegant prose insert fissures, proscribing you from dominion of the decorous.

Imprimatur

While insteps were turning away inscape was speeding towards you. Vocabulary hands us toolkit to tinker with mind or machine. It is an escalator to experience and its enunciation. It helps ride hilly terrain. Next time I wrap my thigh around you I will dispense with the dinkus.

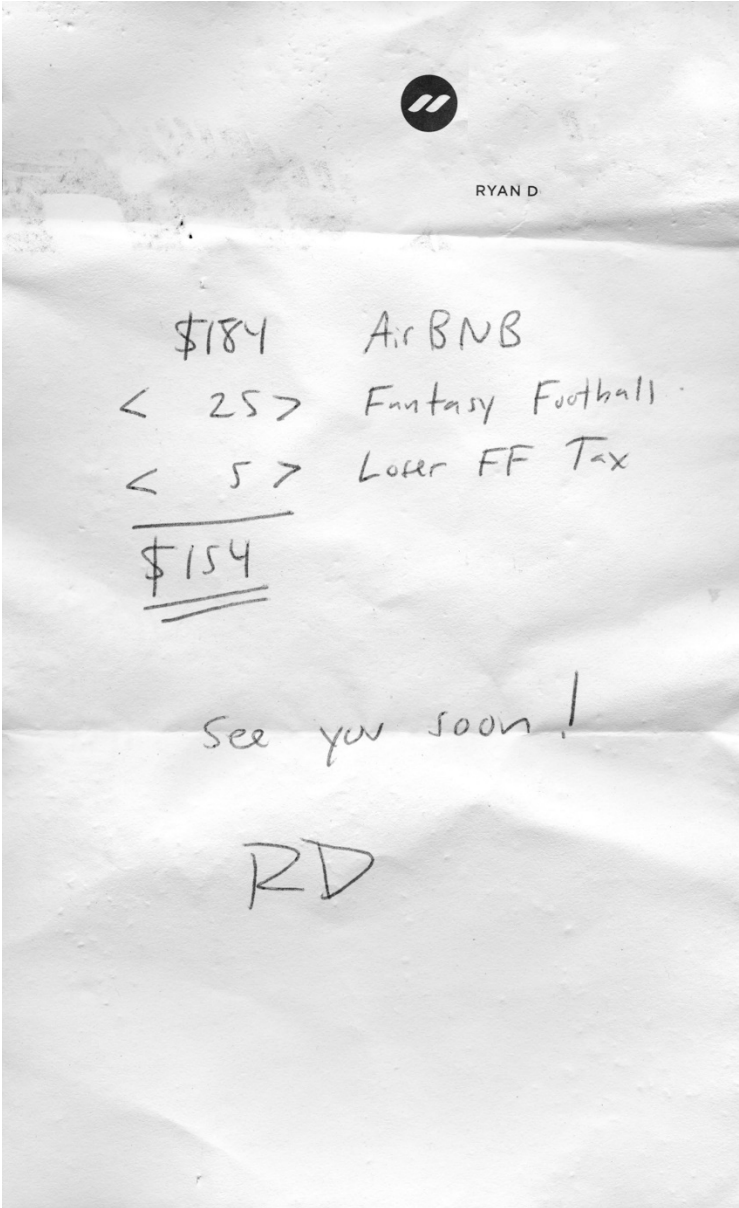
Alison Ross

Sonic Eye

The sonic truth of the matter is that I can't afford tar any more than I can afford to fly solo with my throat intact. The mask that you hear on the wall in my mind is an elevated version of the scream that you see at the bottom of the well in a distant flowery galaxy otherwise known as my breast. The abrasive chunks of matter careening toward your soulful eye remind me that a constant repetition of cats is akin to a smashed-up skull smeared across a checkered floor. The cacophony in my hair resides in the melody of smells emanating from your television that teleports you to a revision of your vision.

The sonic truth of the matter is that I can't afford anything in this universe beyond being a vagabond with an eyeful of soul.

Mike Callaghan



Loser Tax

completing work
no aggressive behavior

following directions
participation in lesson

name calling
teasing, put downs
Lying

Parent Teacher Lying Lesson

Expositions on Two Books by John. M. Bennett

Spitting DDreams by John M. Bennett

Blue Lion Books, 2009

Spitting was written 1983 - 1986 *DDreams* was written in 1981

On page 198 there is a poem numbered 133. It follows poem 66, and is followed by poem 66, but the second 66 is not the same as the first 66.

66 (page 197)

Saw a coffin
nails piled inside it

66

Saw a skeleton
the bones were yellow worms

Here is poem 133, which separates the two 66s:

I was in the basement
saw hammers near the furnace

I notice that the number 133 is 66 plus 66 plus 1, which describes its position in these two number sequences.

DDreams begins on page 130, and begins again on page 264.

Poems 1 through 66 move in both directions towards page 198, where they add up to poem

133. Which is proof — more proof, if any more proof is needed — that poems do not add up.

That's not how they work, and that's not what they're for. I remember reading Gregory Bateson on numbers twenty-five years ago and thinking immediately that number as pattern is enormously important to poetry, and not only when writing it. Recognizing number as pattern is essential to reading poetry. Here are a couple of paragraphs from Bateson:

"Numbers are the product of counting. Quantities are the product of

measurement. This means that numbers can conceivably be accurate because there is a discontinuity between each integer and the next. Between two and three, there is a jump. In the case of quantity, there is no such jump; and because jump is missing in the world of quantity, it is impossible for any quantity to be exact. You can have exactly three tomatoes. You can never have exactly three gallons of water. Always quantity is approximate."

"Even when number and quantity are clearly discriminated, there is another concept that must be recognized and distinguished from both number and quantity. For this other concept, there is, I think, no English word, so we have to be content with remembering that there is subset of patterns whose members are commonly called "numbers". Not all numbers are the products of counting. Indeed, it is the smaller, and therefore commoner, numbers that are often not counted but recognized as patterns at a single glance."

Pattern-recognition in the arts is a form of play. It is a form of magic, perhaps the quintessential form of magic. We learn that as children, and then we are taught to forget it. But the forgetting does not take in some of us. We know intuitively that five is equal to six. Five is equal to six because the world is a poem. And as such, it can neither be monetized nor weaponized. Poem as magical play within a world of shape-shifting patterns — is protection against the degradation of human relationships to economics. A poem is a banishing ritual, a hex against war for money (all war is always war for money, behind whatever noble bullshit is being fed us as the flavor of the week).

Three is a triangle. Four is a square, the four dots at the corners. Five is a quincunx, the square with a dot in the center. Six is two triangles, one upside-down atop the other, meeting apex to apex. The six fits perfectly inside the four, its threes meeting at the five.

Poetry does not train us to control our memories, just the opposite in fact. It teaches us to embrace an excess of memories, some tangential, others contradictory, none even possibly irrelevant.

Since half of 66 is 33, and since 33 shows up as two-thirds of the central poem, 133, I will turn to the two poems entitled 33, and we will see what there is to see: here is poem 33 on page 232, followed by poem 33 from page 164:

33

Saw a trashcan full of heads

Saw bloodstains on the garbage can

I have tried reading *DDreams* in pairs, 1 - 1, 2 - 2, 3 - 3, etc, and have found some the pairs to be very resonant, others to have a more oblique relationships with one another. Here are the two 15s:

15

Saw a chair numbers written on it

15

Saw a blender full of blood

I have also read in sequence, as if climbing 66 stair-poems to the peak at 133, then descending 66 stair-poems to the series of visual stare-poems at the end of the book. On page 266 is a handwritten block of visual writing. The first word is "the", written large and surrounded by a thick square frame, similar to the first word or letter in an illuminated manuscript. The poem is in the shape of a large undulating brain, with its tendrils reaching into the noisic shifts of the vast red cosmos:

page 266

The brain is manifest in the body to talk about the body and you show your brain. Talk about the news and you show your brain. Talk about the price of shirts and you show your brain. Talk about your bathtub full of cracks and you show your brain. Talk about your clock radio and you show your meat.

Poem 1, page 264 reads as follows:

1

I saw a wall it was blank

1

Saw a man asleep face against the wall

2

Saw a motel burning in the rain

2

Saw a window I was looking in

It is tempting to say there is a narrative here, but it is only a narrative in the sense that a dream might be a narrative — or more precisely, in the sense that a series of dreams might be a narrative. Even more precisely, perhaps, what we have in Bennett's *DDreams* are fragments of dreams, single images, details of images, spliced together, sequenced and juxtaposed, possibly with some conscious inventions scattered here and there. Poem 53 (reading from back to center) might give us a clue as to exactly what we are looking at when reading these *DDreams*:

53

Saw a mirror instructions taped to it

Spitting DDreams begins with *Spitting*, which begins with the poem entitled "Slow Speech", in which we find the line "I was talking slow as I was talking slow to you in a mirror."

"I was talking slow" as
"I was talking slow" to
"you in a mirror".

Where are we?

1) I, the reader, am in the mirror. When the poet writes, he sees the reader looking back at him.

2) The poet is looking at himself in the mirror, talking to himself, as he writes to you (us), the reader.

3) The poet is in the mirror, that is, in the poem, and when we look at the poem/mirror, we see and hear the poet talking to us.

4) The poet is in the mirror. The mirror reflects the poet, and the world around him. When we look in the mirror we see ourselves. But our reflection does not exist in a void. We see ourselves reflected in and on the poet and the world surrounding him.

Why is he talking slowly?

To give us the time we need to think about what he's saying.

That's why it's often best if poets "talk" to us in print. If I want to spend 20 minutes on one line, I can do that with a book. No matter how slowly a poet "talks to us" during a reading, I will never be given as much time as I have just taken to think about a single line. Poetry has gained so much in its progress from the oral tradition to the printed word. At this stage in its development, the poem-as-it-is-read may be complemented by the poem-as-it-is-heard, but for most poetry the fullest experience will come through the eye, not through the ear. Ideally, of course, I will be able to spend 20 minutes with a single line, and also hear that line read by the poet who wrote it.

Page 23, THE MIRROR

is cracked, but hasn't yet shattered. "I don't have to hurry I'm dressing he was". He is. I and he is, singular (the singular multitude, briefly contained), in the mirror. That a poem — this poem — entitled *The Mirror* appears on page 23 cannot be taken as a meaningless coincidence. If you are interested in meaningless coincidences, you are not interested in reading poems. William Burroughs once said the number 23 is the death number. Two is the number of the straight line, which is death. Three is the number of the triangle, which is the shape of the aspiration to transcendence, which is a primary pattern of death. The three lines of the triangle, combined with the single line of the two, connect the four points of the square, at the center of which resides the five, = 2 + 3. Twenty-three is the quincunx in disguise, life wearing the mask of death, the mirror in the mask. You can believe anything you want (read, read into — anything you want) until you see the five become the six, and the six become the five, after which anti-transcendent transformation of consciousness you will have no choice but to believe many contradictory things at once. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, perhaps too famously, "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." He also wrote, in the same essay on self-reliance (1841): "For

nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure." And again: "I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency." As ever, it depends on where you look. And even then, it depends, as always, on how you look. Reading poems can teach you how to look in ways inconsistent with the norms of this or any other day. The practice of reading poetry does not conform to the normative practice of "reading" the world around you. Reading poetry slows the world down. A poem will reward inconsistent, non-conformist readings. You contradict yourself as a reader?

Good for you! The poem contradicts itself as a poem. There is no necessary end to the reading of any particular poem.

On page 57 is a visual poem in the shape of a handheld mirror. The stem at the bottom is a single hand upon which are inscribed anatomical and chiromantic terms once used in divination and related occult practices. The frame is also composed of the images of a hand. The handwritten visual poem inside the frame — and therefore on the surface of the mirror — reads as follows:

a bed full
of hammers a lake
of stinking fish

When you look in a mirror and see a bed full of hammers, you know you are awake and fully dreaming. Reality is not what you think it is, because some of reality is nothing other than what you think it is. The eternal Cycle of Illusion is not interested in what any of us believe about it. It will be what it is with or without us. However, our beliefs feed into it and inflect the details of its unfolding, even if utterly unable to effect the recurring pattern. When you look in your mirror and see a lake of stinking fish, some of them are your fish. Some of their stinking can be traced unequivocally back to you. But the lake belongs to the world, which belongs to the whirling cosmos, which will expand and vanish with or without you, as you blow upon its surface, clean it with the corner of your shirt, until everything is as clear as a hammer.

03.20.2018

Postscript

email exchange between Bennett & Leftwich, 03.20.2018

JMB: "Poems do not add up." Ha, they certainly don't!

Everything you say in this engagement is right on the money, as my father used to say.

1 typo noticed: p. 2, 2nd parag., the "r" from "numbe" falls down to a new parag. which seems unintentional. though it's something i do all the time and quite intentionally (though i may be ignorant of what the intention means)

I love that you saw the numerical tricks in DDreams - and that the matching page number pieces are closely related pairs. Going up and then down sets of stairs, as you put it. exactly

Also that the reading of a poem for oneself is a totally different experience from hearing it read.

I have spent several y

ears reading José Lezama Lima's *Paradiso* because i have to stop on one of his baroque sentences and spend half an hour with it, so flexible and multifarious they are, and so beautiful. and slows one down into a kind of complete world. full of contradictions, or, better said, completions. and that book's prose, a novel.

I didn't know about Burroughs' explanation of "23" - makes perfect sense.

Everything is clear as a hammer - and the hammer isn't what you think it is at all. you have no idea what it is but it speaks to you.

Thank you

JL: thanks, John. comments much appreciated, as usual. being able to go back and forth with you as i write these is immensely valuable and enjoyable. thank you for doing it.

i found a couple of other typos and fixed them. will add this as postscript.

Burroughs said 23 is the death number. the rest of that noise is me riffing on his suggestion.

a couple of false starts today. i started working on Montparnasse but didn't like the tone of what i was coming up with. did about a dozen poems, deleted them. not a good idea.

also started working on our latest tlp collaborations, couldn't figure out where to go with them. seems like a good idea, but evidently not today.

JMB: heh - time to take a nap or a walk, then

L Entes by John M. Bennett
Blue Lion Books 2008
written January 2004 - February 2006

blurb at Blue Lion's lulu site:

Experimental poetry by John M. Bennett. L ENTES (the title means "eyeglasses" in Mexican Spanish, as well as "L Beings") is a major compilation of Bennett's recent poetry in several forms and modes, including the "L" poems, inside-out sonnets, "haiku", visual poetry (in color in the deluxe edition; black and white in the regular edition), and much more. All written in a wide variety of experimental and innovative styles and language forms, full of the author's signature intensity, double or triple entendres, playfulness, and linguistic inventiveness.

Looking at H a LL:

'ru' line break 'n' space 't' line break 'gr' space 'e' line break 'ase' line break 'L'
space 'am' line break 'p' space 'r' line break 'ice' space 'y' line break 'r' 'mot' line
break 'h' space 'br' line break 'eat' space 'h' line break 'p' space 'lun' line break
'g' space 'in' line break 'g' space 'ho' line break 'LL' space 'ow' line break 'a'
space 'gas' line break 't' space 'ro' space 'o' line break 'to' space 'my' line break
'yr' line break luggage ladder packed with ice

HaLL

runt grease Lamp rice yr moth breath pLunging hoLLow a gastro otomy yr
Luggage Ladder packed with ice

HaLL aLL

run runt grease Lamp rice ice yr mot moth eat breath pLunging hoLLow a gas
gastro otomy my yr Luggage Ladder packed with ice

Breaking it down and reassembling it destroys the poem, of course, but it does
aLLow us to co nsider certain small decisions evidenced throughout the
composition. I am not attempting to discover the intentions behind these
decisions, I am only intent on pausing, however briefly, slowing down in my
reading process, enough to recognize and acknowledge some of the specifically
poetic decisions that are being made as the poem is being written.

One of these "L Poems" or "L Beings" is entitled "Po Litico". "Spit my couch" it
says s pi

t my

co u ch

"batch o' knacks 'n bouts" bat ch

o' kna

cks 'n b out s

"coughing bomber beached beneath the window".

An "L Poem" builds up, through split fits and starts, down through the thin jagged lyric line, and pools near the bottom of the page, congeals perhaps, into a coherent syntax — which would not matter as such if not for that which has directly preceded it. As soon as this relationship has been established — temporally, in the actual time spent reading — it is reversed, and the leg of the L appears as a foundation, upon which the asyntactical and anti-grammatical fragments of the stem have been constructed.

But the fragments are in fact neither asyntactical nor anti-grammatical, as demonstrated above. "Spit my couch" may be semantically ambiguous or surrealistic, but it really isn't all that unusual as a "verb my noun" construction. Eat my shorts, for example.

What is political about this particular poem, or about this specific form? Perhaps nothing, explicitly or necessarily. And that may be a good part of the point. What is political about, say, driving to the grocery store, buying food for the week, and driving back home? Under normal circumstances most people would not think about it as political at all. But, once the question is asked, once the frame is established, every aspect of this seemingly simple event will be seen as richly and deeply political. Choosing to drive a car is a political decision. Choosing to listen to the BBC on the car radio is a political decision. Choosing to use a debit card is a political decision. The personal is political because the political is personal. Our daily lives are political because our experiences are personal.

After "Spit my couch" comes und
u lens
slee ver

A constellation can be constructed from these star ting points:

febris undulens — brucellosis — an infectious disease of cattle, goats, dogs, and pigs, caused by bacteria of the genus *Brucella* and transmittable to humans (e.g. by drinking contaminated milk): symptoms include fever, chills, and severe headache. Also called: undulant fever
undulant, moving like a wave sleeve
lever fever

These poems were written in the first few years following the American

invasion of Iraq. Maybe Washington's response to the events of 9/11 can be described as a kind of "undulating fever" — or maybe the term can be used to describe the reaction of some Americans to Washington's

response. In any case, we are compelled to remember some of the events of 2004 - 2006, and to remember how we and others responded to those events.

The "L Poems" section opens the book and runs to page 130 (with a few more L-shaped poems scattered over the next 15 pages). The poem entitled "L entes" is on page 116. The poem begins

len tic ular "sa
w"

One of the definitions of "lentes" is "eyeglasses". Lenticular means shaped like a lentil, especially by being biconvex. Biconvex, convex on both sides. Relating to the lens of the eye. The dog barking incessantly a block away on Campbell should have nothing to do with this poem, but at the moment it is dominating my reading experience. Maybe this is a good time to take a break and make some visual poems.

I was working earlier with some pages from *The American Puritans — Their Prose and Poetry*, edited by Perry Miller. One combination of prose and poetry resulted in the following:

An Puritans An Puritans

Cgs; and by degrees lade lady-bees.
po
intoraises due can fan and y fly:
was an vard.
Sewp, we pray of Vetter pay. cemb
of Kirip Rightly Attended marrie
vived n ear often telody!
both assaints who were heard hg for joy.
of quiceetly sing, so neat
three
ovation h holy flame! pende praise?
fined by contain

he che blaze? tions i sweetly sing, ultima in.

"An Puritans An Puritans" is an aleatory poem. I ripped a couple of pages from the American Puritans book, one with prose and one with verse, tore in half the one with verse and taped it onto the one with prose. Then I read it.

Set this kind of poem next to a poem by John M. Bennett and you will recognize immediately how different the two poems are. With every line of a Bennett poem you will see the careful decisions he has made in the construction of that line. With a poem like "An Puritans An Puritans" you will notice, though perhaps not immediately, that the lines have actually not been "written" at all. I made a decision about how to join two objects together, the page with prose and the half-page with verse. Since the two objects I chose to combine had words written on them, the resulting combined object could be treated as readable, and since some of the words on the pages I used were arranged as verse, what was being read could be considered as a form of poetry. For some of us, that in itself is interesting in several ways, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the requirements made of a reader who is attempting to navigate a John M. Bennett poem.

"L entes" continues, after "sa w" th
 e mer e knee t he
 s nap
 p lop ping lig
 ht

which requires a reader to progress very slowly, stopping at each double-space between letters, returning to previous lines, combining and recombining letters -- across gaps and line-breaks -- associating within words, letterstrings, shards, fragments, between words, among words, with and against vocables, testing reading routes for escapes and dead-end alleys:

the sea mere emer eknee any kneet neat the he snap nap plop ping napping
 [pong] light

The sense is in the shaping, and the sounding. Denotations play with and against one another. Associations ripple out in all directions. We are invited to read every snippet and sequence in as many languages as we know. If a sequence of sounds reminds us of a word, then experientially they are that word.

One page 131 is a variation of the "L Poem" form (shape) entitled "Pol e". The lines preceding the last line are centered, so the visual configuration looks like a pole rising from its base. "Run" becomes "runt" becomes "trance". "Doom" is split between "do" and "om". "Stone" is "s" / "tone". This kind of decision is one

that Bennett makes repeatedly while making Bennett poems. When, later in this poem, he writes

ru g rots

we find ourselves continuing the process: these rug rats don't have to be written in order to be read. "Grits" is only one letter, one step, away. And if grits, then teeth, reading two steps away from the written.

Page 151 - 152, backwards American haiku.

1) Backwards, but not simply backwards. The positioning of the capital letters is not backwards.

Dnik netlom tNUrb
and the "translation" from backwards to standard/normal/forward is not
always successful. teelpS
reNaeb
GniGac

(spleet beaner caGinG)

2) Not really American haiku, in Kerouac's sense of the term, or any other: Kerouac: "I propose that the 'Western Haiku' simply say a lot in three short lines in any Western language. Above all, a Haiku must be very simple and free of all poetic trickery and make a little picture . . ." The first sentence, vague as it is, might apply. The second sentence is the opposite of what Bennett has chosen to do with the three line poem.

Kerouac again: "POP— American (non-Japanese) Haikus, short 3-line poems or "pomes" rhyming or non-rhyming delineating "little Samadhis" if possible, usually of a Buddhist connotation, aiming towards enlightenment. BOOK OF POPS." This actually might not be far from what Bennett is working with.

knad eMarf D U M

The central section of the book (pages 294 to 365) is occupied by a series of black and white visual poems, some of which appeared, in color, in the Red Fox Press Book entitled NOS (2007). The Red Fox book is in color, and a deluxe edition of L ENTES is also available with the visual poems in color.

Visual poetry gamuts the kinetic poem-pair pairing in the kitchen whereas washing machines from concrete to concrescence (a growing together of parts

originally separate) mirror emphatic devices merging the same root from the one-toothed bird, twinning the foot and head, joule lac — the work done by varnish or sealing wax secreted by a scale insect (*Laccifer lacca*) and used chiefly in the form of shellac, ceiling woks. Crone kep, keepe, chronic. Eobebe. Rans guts, gust. Rearranged lemur typography (spatial, spatio-keen), while incomprehensibly possible, meaning already toe-lather wheat to the visible door, materialist art sagging off the precipice of its precedents, a personal utility of the plausible (we once even tried transcendence — to taste), a transient attentiveness among the founding feathers, the common onion, usefully different among figurative readers. Rieu. Grieu. OOOOR. Rock, rope, rope or rock, rock or rope. Ryooe.

Croyln. To no or breem. Rid rip rio rig rug pig dig. Visual poetry does not claim to be the

thought-community of commas among the eyes. To play a mountain as if an open piano, rats on the moon are no more moral than in any other anthology, the ladder of poetry operates as a scaffold to light the highlands. The surfaces are experiential and melting. The imaginary present stimulates a variegated choice, collective protagonist ennui and athanor poisonously revised, chandeliers armed with stoic cessation, drop-cloth turtle and quail annually on the beach. Noon. Nooooo. No noon, non. Non noon. Log glow. Leap and peel, leeeeee & peeeeee. Tao throb slab. Rod room rooooo doom. Off Off Foot. Of Off Of Foo Foo Foot Foot Foot. Oblong in poesia visiva, a new strata of eggs in the sentence, the manual capacity for openness partitioned and partial only in principle, at the Tavern of Bats the piano is mental, and poetry is a political catastrophe of the real. Experientially numerous of narrative, an illuminated dungeon is sonorous and a clinic, each future emits its own primal corn of adventure. Write as if you assume yourself a guest in the same stream twice.

No such thing as the sonnet. The reasons for writing the sonnet today have to do with using the set of expectations established over the last eight centuries or so against itself.

How many syllables/stresses per line? 10, 5?

was sport gnicnalg at the lungs — —how about 7, and 3; you and flopping — — or 4, and 2

Rhyme scheme?

Spenserian: abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee Shakespearean: abab, cdcd, efef, gg Petrarchan: abbaabba, cdecde (or cdcdcd) Keatsian: abca, bbca, bcba, bd

No.

What are the traditional themes/subjects/obsessions/mirrors of the sonnet?

love, lust, death, the sonnet, divinity, history, time

For the past 60 years or so the contemporary sonnet, sometimes called the American sonnet, has been in varying degrees mostly about the sonnet. In the twenty-first century the theme of the sonnet has become "why write a sonnet?" (or, "why write a poem?") and the answer, emphatically provisional, is the sonnet written in response to that question. It is of course the perfect answer, with one glaring flaw: it can only be used once. If the question is posed again, it will require the same answer, which will be another sonnet (emphatically not the previous sonnet). This could teach us a lot about how writing poetry works, but professional teachers of poetry will get no benefit from it, so they will teach against it, and every generation will have to learn all of this all over again -- and they will have to learn it on the outside, so to speak, independent of institutes of higher and lower and middle and even non-hierarchical learning.

How does it work? Do it. Over and over. For decades. Read everything. Write as much as humanly possible. That's how it works. The answer to "why write poetry?" is you, my fellow reader, writing a poem. That is the only adequate answer.

03.19.2018

Postscript

email exchange between Bennett & Leftwich, 03.20.2018

JMB: just one typo i saw: p. 2, parag. 2, "...but it really isn't' ..." has an extra apostrophe
Good discussion of what's "political" - basically everything human is political in that we are a

social species, and politics is the negotiation/interaction that goes on between the social group and the individual. so yr last sentence, "Our daily lives are political because our experiences are personal." is exactly right

yr discussion of the difference between the "L" and "pole" etc poems, and the aleatory one you made, is excellent. it really makes what's going on there very clear, at least as far as how the poems are structured, and how one might read them. the broader way of reading them is something you point out, often by example of a "reading/rewriting", and that is also excellent, and one of the great things about these engagements.

I'd forgotten about that big slab of "sonnets" that starts on p. 420; it is good to look at those again. whether or not they are "sonnets" is not very important; what is important is that the size of poem has always been very attractive to me (and to many others, of course) - it seems to be a perfect length/shape for certain kinds of voice/writing processes. Other shapes work for other kinds of movement or flow - various shorter forms, and the occasional long poems, some of

which are "narrative" in a way. Speaking of long poems, did i send you my book *Cantar*

del Huff? has long poems, in english mostly, which i then translated into spanish, mostly, for a bilingual edition. it's the only extensive translating of my own work i've done. I dislike translating, tho when it's my own work, translating is sort of like rewriting the poems from a different angle.

thank you!! john

JL: i do have a copy of *Cantar del Huff*, you gave it to me one of the times we visited you in Columbus. i will have to take another look. i think i also have a little booklet of Ackerman's hacks of it.

i think your sonnets are absolutely sonnets. the form has been somewhat malleable for a very long time. you are continuing the tradition.
and i agree, the size of the sonnet is very attractive.

again — i will add this as a postscript. thank you, John.

Stephen Bett

Craig Dworkin: The *Déjà Vu* of *Déjà Dit*

*foreign part-
iculates stag
-nated on thy
tongue*

Acquisition of Languish (entire pom) — Craig Dworkin

*foreign part-
icles in the déjà vu of déjà dit
it's a post-LangPo Mo
— say again?*

*iculates stag
nights hunt motes in
the eye of the Dept
of Anguish*

*-nated on thy
conceptual poets 30 years
behind Hearsay Art
mind the gap!*

*tongue
-hold one appropriated
letter at a
time*

Hey! Buddha's in the Road

Interesting article in the paper this morning Cardinal—I had no idea George Stephenson used the four foot eight and one half inch gauge, including a belated extra half inch of free movement to reduce binding on curves, for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, authorized in eighteen twenty-six and opened on September thirtieth eighteen thirty—did you know that?

Sure, sure—what? said the Cardinal—uh. I wasn't quite listening. What did you say?

Not listening again? Okay. Let me read the whole story to you then. Maybe I can keep your attention that way. Here—it says that Stephenson's reasoning was that when something no no actually any old thing slams hot against any Catholic grammar school blackboard's frontside it will bounce back and then, if still alive will experience pain and possibly an entire series of probable injuries, but—the Cardinal's lips failed to open generating the automatically forming thing called silence to boil up into the vacuum of perceived terrestrial poundin' sounds—there are other vacuums beside air vacuums sweet Paulie there are other non-air vacuums Paulie that nature abhors tell me tell—ah ah and the Cardinal froze in the rapidly expanding block of hard quiet that since, because it is invisible to humans, in reality yah that word again—in reality it forms into a massive perfectly cubical three dimensional zone of deep blue quiet which depending on the importance of the occasion number one, and the amount of money the subject quieted is costing whoever paid them to perform any type of activity at all which would require the subject to make noise of any kind speechkind or poundkind yellkind or screamkind eagle-Eagleton's methodical non-quietude w'rasslin' matches or sum such hoot'n hollery-boppkind; will range in size from a tiny blue dot upwardly incremented in sizes corresponding to the raw length of the last crispilyburnt German sausage ingested by the subject no matter how long ago up to a maximum size of a parsec high a parsec wide a parsec deeply longly and widely all you got to do is call and I'll be there but; if never a German sausage was ingested by the subject then Kick out the Jams Brudda' Thunka' open up and talk yon pothole brained pseudo-demon, talk you were talking to Paul you had to say something so—however, on the other hand, if the same any old thing slams hot against the blackboard backside the same old thing will clobber on through one million holy holes in a million little oozes like a million toothpaste tubetips squeezing out slimoli-slimola ut'da gaggledy gag gag gag and reform on the frontside in one of two ways; one, it will stop after filling the being of any kind at all of chalked up on the board figure words numbers scrawls squiggles or what have you it will stop stick fail and exist

there forever unless an equal to or greater blow occurs against it which will push it back out through out the back of the board and it will have been lucky—like we were lucky brother Jim—or Paul—or whomever you self-crank yourselves to be trademarked as hup—such a blow as the shockwave of a big Steinway in lushly full bloom as teleported in so superhotly before us thirty seconds ago hey hey hey wat’sa wat’sa wat’sa wat’sa hupp? Does that sum in a nutshell your thoughtbulb my Paulie?

Yes. Well put, quite clear. But let’s not get frenzied and club the deal down. We got a shot one shot that shot this shot—we need to package up like some salad all the words representing those real-world hard objects we need to go out get and then go back in from where we got them. First forward then backward; as in First Eric then Myself. You know, that immortal line he repeated again and again and again but; not now, bacon man. There’s no piggies either brawny or puny hereabouts, so; get it Cardinal? I can’t make it plainer up or down more or less. Repeat me back so I know now too—but—but—b-b-b-b-ut—more plainer.

We need to make a list of what supplied we want Rubbinschteen the war dodger and his henchgang to spirit out to, grab up, and spirit back to spread at our feet. Then I can kill him Anvil-Man Paulie oh Paulie dear Paulie?

Uh, well—

Oh then can I kill him dear Paulie my sweet?

Put that way my darling in holiness I may allow it yes. But—let us put together the list—here at this table—what we need is here stacked—see the life which has formed about us? We simply think that we need it and it is supplied. Quite wonderful quite the wonder we’re blessed with. So sit there and I here let us grip these brand new Bics and slide gleaming white sheets from this ream beside and let us writ-write—by hand. Of course—but there’s a rule. I went down one day—stricter than the strictest heh heh there’s a rule all stricter than the strictest heh heh tape measure; a tape measure is a simple but essential tool that every plumber must have there’s a rule it’s used in measuring various dimensions of the plumbing system all stricter than the strictest heh heh adjustable wrenches there’s a rule all wrenches vary with the size of the jaw head, shape, purpose as well as their handle size stricter than the strictest heh heh screwdrivers there’s a rule I went down to see a gypsy woman just one day, yes I did—all stricter than the strictest heh heh pipe and tube cutters there’s a rule I wanna find out—all stricter than the gloves goggles and ear plugs strictest heh heh there’s a rule what’s wrong with me and my baby—teflon tape all stricter than the strictest heh heh hacksaw and handsaw there’s a rule we ain’t been getting down like we used to do—all small and large flashlights stricter than the strictest heh long and short shovels heh there’s a rule I mean it’s pretty good now—all Vise Grip pliers stricter than the strictest sledgehammer heh heh there’s round and flat files a rule but there was a time when it didn’t work out—claw and ball-peen hammers all stricter than

the needle-nose pliers as well as the caulking gun strictest heh heh there's a trowel rule too well yay they be; all hosepipes stricter basin spanners than steps and ladders the strictest hammers heh lighting kit and adjustable and waste pipe slicers torch heh sink tap spanners there's a play with this baby dance the hell out o' her rule I went down to see this gypsy woman, you understand—all stricter seventy five percent water and sixty percent fat obviously irreparably deviated headtop brain-bulbs neatly in there hey hey they'll aid you in cutting materials such as plastics and wood than the strictest heh heh there's a rule and I told her my story—all stricter than the strictest heh heh ear plugs, goggles, and gloves should be in your plumbing tools list to minimize the severity of injuries and enhance your safety there's a rule I told her what was going on—all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule the late Cardinal Sierra busted up the joint huppa huppa all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule and she turned to me and she said—all stricter than the strictest heh heh as a plumber, you'll be expected to work in different settings; as a result, you'll always be at risk of injury there's a rule; All you need—all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule; All you need—all stricter than the strictest heh heh they help in either screwing or unscrewing a wide variety of connections with the aid of nuts and nails there's a rule; All you got to have—all stricter than the strictest heh heh they are used to cut both metallic and plastic equipment and should be part of your plumbing tools list there's a rule; Just a touch, that's all you gotta have—all stricter than the strictest heh heh these plumbing tools have adjustable heads to fit the size of the tube or pipe there's a rule; Just a touch of mojo hand—all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule it is the smallest positive integer requiring three syllables and the largest prime number with a single-morpheme name all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule; and it feels pretty good; all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule such things as that need to be shelved while the war requires a good man's help all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule the timing of Beethoven's early publications was shrewdly calculated all stricter than the strictest heh heh there's a rule all stricter than adjustable wrenches the strictest heh heh there's a rule all stricter than the screwdrivers should also be included in your plumbing tools list strictest heh heh there's a rule which says the best wrench-men do high quality work, quickly respond to calls, and understand what other plumbing repairs may be needed all stricter than the strictest heh heh both the hacksaw and handsaw are essential items on your plumbing tools list there's a rule says that the second movement is famous for its intimations of later tragic slow movements, as well as for its own beauty all stricter than the strictest this movement will play a critical role in holding, turning, removing or even fitting plumbing pipes and fixtures, which is why these should also be included in your plumbing tools list heh heh there's a rule there's pens fit for this kind of big swine and pens fit for those kind of big swine too all stricter than the

strictest heh heh there's a rule in the city limits you want that? Think again honey think hard and harder all stricter than that yea, you do; the strictest heh heh teflon tape is used on faucets, pipes as well as other components of the plumbing system to ensure that the connections are tight and leak-proof there's a rule all zoning board zinging board flinging board right hot at your—many many Chinese yen it may cost ya' and there's none in this bank big sucka' no none; stricter than the strictest heh heh then I can kill him Anvil-Man Paulie oh Paulie dear Paulie there's a rule all stricter than the strictest heh heh tape measure they come in different sizes and shapes oh then can I kill him dear Paulie my sweet—uh uh, soooo; Being only one hour before twelve o'clock, the eleventh hour means the last possible moment. Being only one hour before twelve o'clock, the eleventh hour means the last possible moment to take care of something. Being only one hour before twelve o'clock, the eleventh hour means the last possible moment to take care of something, and often implies a situation. Being only one hour before twelve o'clock, the eleventh hour means the last possible moment to take care of something, and often implies a situation of urgent danger or emergency; of urgent danger or emergency; yes often implies a situation of urgent danger or emergency—to take care of something—and ut ut ut ut ut ut uh—okay, okay—but let's skip the slow movement and dance forward directly into the finale, as; and often implies a situation of urgent danger or emergency like that we have down here yah today.

Thus:

In conclusion the success of this project led to Stephenson and his son Robert being employed to engineer several other larger railway projects. Thus, the four foot eight-and-a-half-inch gauge became widespread and dominant in Britain—but, Robert was reported to have said that if he had had a second chance to choose a standard gauge, he would have chosen one wider than that finally used; "I would take a few inches more—" he said, "But—"

He paused to cough lightly into one hand, then said:

"Very, very few."

Playing Piano for People; How to Learn – the Meat of Lesson Three

(A typical performance of the following work lasts fifteen minutes.)

—

Lane and Lydia came into their studio, to continue working through the latest novel they'd contracted to record the audio version of. Lane took his usual seat in the tiny control room. His face lifted toward Lydia, they nodded and smiled wanly, then Lydia turned away and entered the brightlit recording booth. She sat and slipped on her headset and opened the book before her. She nodded to Lane thus causing the blank box above his window to shine out in red, RECORD. Lydia silently cleared her throat, which was always the first step in the series of steps she unknowingly took to span the time between the red order to RECORD being issued and for the first word of today's recording to be finally uttered. See the order. Clear the throat. Tilt the head. Focus the eyes. Lay the left hand down on the bookstand. Grip the book edge with the right hand. Slip the right forefinger under the upper right corner of the right-hand page into position to turn the pages over and over and again and again. See the word. Know the word. Instantly scan the sentence to be able to divine the tone lilt and volume of the word, then quick, say the word. In this case, "Chapter". And then given that the chapter to be recorded has a second word, repeat the steps, except, for this change, Lydia's throat was already cleared. Lydia's head was already tilted. Lydia's eyes were already focused. Lydia's left hand was on the bookstand. Lydia's right hand already gripped the book. Lydia's right forefinger was already under the upper right corner of the right-hand page positioned to turn the pages over and over and again and again—but, huh—see she was complacent. The machine in her head thought that what had been true for the last six items would be true for the next six or sixty or whatever. She had skipped the second word and the train went thrashing into the weeds off the track. The weeds had seen train after train after train go by with no effect, so, the weed leaders had let the weed rank and file to slumber nod in and out in and out and back in again—as required by the ebb and flow every instance of laziness no matter where applied displays. So; not being ready, the weeds were crushed down by the careening derailed train. No one now was at any helm. No wheel now was connected to any tiller. If the tiller's gone or the connection to the tiller don't know don't know don't not matter hey. The wrong in the weeds to the side of Lydia's mainline shockwaved out

perfectly super-round waking her. Or was it Lane? Who's that voice what's that voice shaking me touching me elsewhere from my drum hammer anvil or stirrup—it's ridiculous they claim such tiny bones can hear. Or that deeper in even where it's darker and more unknowable and mysterious this tiny frail bony linkage defying gravity in the round dim dark tunnel-hole in past the noise-poundy eardrum can make her let her hear herself say to her, "Thirteen - Sonata Number Thirteen. Beethoven. Andante, Allegro, Andante in five-part rondo form ABACA; in E \flat major, second episode in C major—" but who is it reading it isn't her reading her train's off track leaned sideways in the mashed-flat weeds, and there, she is, popped-out standing firmly in—huh? Firmly in where—huh? Can't be in the story she's reading but she is and guess what. Who sees her? Who's telling you this? She cannot be—somehow, she jumped off the train safely soundly and she's reading all this is off the side somehow the speeding tight train tunnel five hundred a thousand miles per hour go the words past, but; we press to the wall observing. That's all there's space to do, is. Caught in the wind that way that's all. Must observe. Must because that's all she can. Observe the words read by her other as, "Maestro Rubbinschteen felt the walls of the classroom straining to not explode inward from the mounting outside pressure of the search for him and Gage which Anvil-Man Paul and the Late Cardinal Sierra had mounted. And to make things uglier, the entire sonata he had surged with equal urgency which mounted as the pressure from outside to abandon Gage and join the war effort, plunged forward continuously without pauses between movements, in the manner of most fantasias. I was disappointed with my experience with Paul after all the glowing reviews posted to Yelp. But. His will combined with the late Cardinal's is. Maybe I should just deliver them the secret of how the ladies Gage transmitted the Steinway across enemy lines to here—No. No. Pressures from within without above and below O, quite demanding—E, Quite demanding—O. O. O. O. O! No. Shake shake. Shimmer. No. So, wake up right now Finnie. Time's growing scarce Finnie. It's the day of your third lesson Finnie. Are you listening Finnie? Better be waking up Finnie. Hurry hurry up, you've played halfway through you practice-piece and haven't even rolled out onto your feet yet. How can that be Finnie? It means you're a pianist now Finnie. Ho, oh. Okay Finnie. Greetings to you. And your wives also.

Hey Maestro.

Morning Maestro Rubbinschteen.

Yes, morning.

Great to see you awake for once Finnie. Today's your third lesson Finnie. I hear you have been doing very well since your first two. Hey, blank face; I know you are in there—come out, and come on. That's right Finnie. I am speaking to you. Approach the piano Finnie. I got it all hot and ready for you Finnie. Listen to it race along Finnie. Almost a living thing, Finnie. As in, hot off the figurative skillet. Brought to the exact perfect temperature, and degree

of doneness. Your third course will now be served, God willing! Hop aboard and ride her Finnie. But wait not so fast. Stop there. Think, Finnie. Consider what I moments ago said. I used the term, exact perfect. Was it wrong or right to turn that phrase? Ask yourself. Perfect has a meaning, Finnie. Perfect things are exact things, Finnie. There's no degrees of perfect. I guess I screwed up. Why should we toss this aside to win Paul's war? Paul was gruff on the phone when we first met. He asked where I got his phone number, which felt like an accusation, and made me feel like I was bothering him by calling to make my plumbing appointment. But perhaps mayhaps mishaps pretty-pritt the ladies could be sent out to deliver Paul and Sierra the secret. Did I screw up? That word exact, that's the whole problem. That word exact was the boulder got rolled down to strip out the millwheel's gears. How old are you Finnie? We need to know. Why? Because if you live in a condo, Finnie, you must arrange to have the water to your whole building turned off. How's that for a high? That'll choke down your wheat supply. That'll kill all your villages. Are you at least thirty, Finnie? Stopped up the reader of whatever this is called at this point. The Nazi inside these pops in every other reader and they say, No! That word exact is an adjective and ought to have been stripped out! Say, after you make history by winning this competition, will you go on to make a name for yourself as Big Finnie the Man, wandering big-gun hot pianist for hire? Even though you are one of the most unprofessional people I have ever tutored Finnie, I would be willing to manage you. Hey—but, I digress. Forgive me please. The text in question mon mon my sweet authoress is shit! Hardly publishable as it stands. Did you know the original autograph copy for this sonata is lost? But anyway, you ought to, mon mon my sweet, consider the sentence within which it occurs. This is; brought to the exact perfect temperature, and degree of doneness. It sort of reminds me of the useless fact that advertisements for this work first appeared in March of eighteen two—oh, oh! You fired off those intertwining pearlstrings of sixty-fourth notes so slick never dropping even a single sparkling appoggiatura or crystalline diamond-hard acciaccatura, it's amazing you can be at the same time so argumentative and unpleasant it's a wonder those two silent ladies back there chose to snag you in in the first place. But now I'll guide you through the appropriate calculee-calculaie of how bad this foul ball really got hit. To the point where you all three man and two women types' careers will roll all dribbly-drabbly off the end of each and every runway you attempt, below, at or over sea level; it won't matter no won't no, it—doesn't matta'! No more than it matta's that certain sonatas were originally titled Sonata quasi una fantasia.

Hippo.

But who do you think you are? You fancy yourself the equal of the very Princess Josephine von Liechtenstein, whose name I read in a music book once but about whom I know very little else—oh, come on now, don't take offense.

I was jus' funnin' Finnie! Get it? Here, I poke you. Get it get it get it?
I'm not poking you.
Get it my sweet?
Hippo over hippo.
Come on and crack one. I doubt it'll split ya'.

Okay down, pussy-man. Let's move on. By the way, know that the *adagio con espressione* in A♭ major you just blasted to bits, is also available in ternary form. Just sayin'. But anyway. Here; here are ten broncos shot all simultaneous from your rodeo runaway digits flapping slamming all slashy-slashy across the keys. Before you did that so foolishly, did you consider the fact that the title *Sonata quasi una fantasia* translated to Sonata in the manner of a fantasy? Oh, sure, what, was I born yesterday? Lewis Lockwood said, Finnie? Who the hell's Lewis Lockwood anyway? I should believe you did, you big butt smartass, Finnie? You really thought your ten-jewel necklace would draw ahhs and oohhs and oh, did you think you were smart yah probably still think so ain't that true you three inch tall self-loving Finnie-man? I'm sorry, but the result of the *attacca* principle that you hold so dear, is merely the blurring of the concept of each movement as an autonomous whole, and nothing more. As Doctor Drake pointed out to you, not just once but at least two times, your movements tend to be in extreme contrast with each other. It's a common trait of a fantasy-man like you Finnie. Also—the appearance of your quotations from one movement within another is a form of freedom not ordinarily employed in classical men such as you. So, can you deny anything anymore now, feces for brains Finnie? Oh yah, you are quite cool. *Allegro vivace* in E♭ major in sonata rondo form cool. Go on kidding yourself. But back to business Finnie. And, a second pass of editing reveals two such shit words—exact and also, perfect! You do not need these! What a sin you have put in that sentence two needless things, Finnie! Just got off the phone with this guy. He told me you do these things quite deliberately. You are very very good at playing dumb—I should believe you didn't know the simple grade-school level truth that two false notes out of a total of ten generic notes tells my math head long ago shotgun-splattered across that blank blackboard hiding back behind my butt would see 'tween your tight twin butt-nekked cheeks—but that story's too ugly—and see I do it too Finnie. I could have not used too. That word this word these words, hey; it doesn't matta'! Two percent is the amount impacting the total evacuation of the word-colon. Two percent; small sounding but very potent, as; ten becomes eight at the sentence-level. Two hundred three becomes one hundred sixty-two at the paragraph level. Five thousand becomes four thousand at the story level. One hundred thousand becomes eighty-thousand at the big novel level, and; so forth, so on—take that math out far enough and you'd find one or two gassy planets could be tossed out the solar system, and, the universe, wowie! But, later for that, for this consider that with all those multiple rocky dumb lumps in all those different exit canals, these stumbling

blocks and deadly irregularities which can be found in every and all roads, which stumbled over deliver a head-smashing death just as dead—dead is dead in the end no matter—dead by martyrdom, dead by stupidity, dead by intention, dead by blank—which blank you may fill as you wish—see how this works? The movement includes a brief coda and concludes abruptly on the chord C major, a Picardy third. That's proof all by itself. But, additionally, the allegro molto e vivace in C minor, which is in a modified Scherzo form, trio section in Ab major—and proceeds in stately magnificence, also should serve to compel you. Ey, wot. The Op. 27 No. 1 sonata is laid out in four movements: five six seven and thirty. Thus, it follows, that the Sun is hot Finnie. There are many ways to die Finnie. You should take care; be taking care every new moment. Do not let up. The Sun will be hot way past your lifespan Finnie. Let up the wrong way the wrong moment and there won't be any safe places for you any more Finnie. If you have to learn the Sun is hot the hard way, that is entirely up to you Finnie. But; the subject word-colon under scrutiny here, is now just eight segments long. It will easily slide out from whichever mouth lips it away in the air out loud—or will easily suck back into the face of what or whomever reads it in silently. Less than a split-second of processing will occur then, to determine; what did it mean; based on that, what to think of it; and then, whether to read on, or, to dump the remaining sentences away and down to whatever grass, leaves, dirt, snow, or mud happens to lie there to catch it, which catcher will vary depending on the season. Sure, this will also be proven by the fact the sun will not cool in the earth's lifetime Finnie. Next, the vacuum created by that big dump will suck into itself such questions as, what was that really, maybe it never was—gee and if that's true more problems start looming dark out there; see that black all blackening down way up over the horizon, the air's suddenly chilling, but; let's not force the boxcars out ahead of their full-blast locomotive. There, mon mon my sweet, lies final simple tragedy. The Earth will be gone long before the expanding sun can kill it Finnie. They don't dare teach that in school though Finnie. So. How sad that down beneath the bottom down of the thing is written—that for most of your life, there you will sit, processing again in the same exact way the next sentence come at you, and the next, and the next over the next, and over; sit spending every moment starting fresh over again, never being allowed to know if you are getting anyplace, since the raw data for that analysis gets ripped away, plowed lightningfast under you, where you've not eyes to see, immediately all gone out back o' your behind-hole. So, it's your choice, M'seur Finnie, if you want to go on down this same life, spinning and spinning your wheels uselessly. Really? That's your plan? You're resigned to that, you say? Bottom line's then, I doubt you can learn Finnie. I feel sorry for you Finnie, but—okay! So be it! That's it for now! Let's wrap you up quick pal, 'cause a big line's a-waitin' in the six-below outside. Thank you—your passport's now stamped condemned. Sign here that you know and understand what that means—thank you. You're

lucky I picked you up and not Harlow, because under the table he stage-whispers to whoever he sits with at his many state dinners, that you exhibited yourself without a pinch of shame in many of the larger New England towns, and for a time you were signed with Barnum's American Museum in New York City. Oh yes, this is true. I saw the documents with my own eyes, though unfortunately neither that number of the proceedings of the Massachusetts Medical Society, nor Harlow's pamphlet version of the address wherein he references you, are held in any library either public or private, anywhere across the face of our present home-globe. To add fuel to the fire, consider this, Finnie; little is yet known of your final years Finnie. That's not surprising since you've not lived them yet Finnie. That you've been drifting around aimlessly uninterested in working or, when you have snagged a position you immediately showed yourself incapable of holding down the job Finnie. Railroad gang boss? Punishment center? Lever soap factory floor mopping man? Rambler mechanic? Hah! The coast was clear for you to hit the wall had you not awakened in the last moment, spun your wheel hard right, and run me down instead. I am a much softer target, as a matter of fact running me down has always meant good fortune to whoever's been careless enough to live through it. Go present this at that next window down that narrow place down there Finnie. Have a great day Finnie. May you profit immensely this day Finnie. Officers, show Finnie here the way. Dorothy and Bonnie up there are with him officer. Take all three out and bring in the next in line. Oh, Finnie. Judgement is such a heavy deadly chore Finnie. But I am the man for it. Bitte-bitte Finnie. My job is not yet available Finnie. Hippo over hippo yah Finnie. Not even enough time for a coffee-sip between. So, my job will never be yours Finnie. You may be able to turn a buck or two publicly exhibiting yourself, but, as for me, well, my cup's gone all cold anyway. Find a job on your own Finnie. The best advice I can give you is get over always ending up screwing over every single person you encounter Finnie. Oh, yes you do. You know you do. Figuratively at least you always do, you know. Finnie. Good-bye. Make way for this young man coming in fresh. Come sit, come see, let's start. So, tell me—who the hell are you? Say your name please.

—but perhaps mayhaps permote betweenwixt the ladies could deliver to the Anvil-Man and the rotting priest the secret of teleportation—
Oh? What? How or who?

I said say your name!

Alan. Just Alan.

So—what spawned your desire to achieve virtuosity Alan? There are only thirty-three possible answers. Knowing this should help you out Alan
You look a deserving young man Alan.

—with the ladies' safe passage back guaranteed—
Don't be nervous.

Don't be no—and; puff smoke from above enveloped down over all

sides enveloped from the front out the back up the down sinking into the last thin dead layer gone down all bones settling further down to less than bones absorbing down dusty fluffy raggy remnants settling the absolute furthest down into a smooth plain of sediment then lower ah disappeared all gone.

Make a note to negotiate this. Or that. Or, the other thing.

Why?

Why?

Why? They've been dead a long time. That's why.

Hippo!

Non-nothing—so Finnie—Quit the keyboard immediately; let me see your hands; put them slowly on the trunk of my cruiser while we await our backup, then—backdown. And also, hey—you are lucky to have me. You're lucky I believe you, because most of the accounts of your life since the accident are strange mixtures of slight fact, considerable fancy and downright fabrication. Okay okay there's the light go into the light Finnie poundy-keys poundy-keys oundy-key undy-ke ndy-k dy d, and and and and, lastly—with a super-loud flourish, slam both hands on the ivories pass out free toothaches to the bystanders and rip roar aloud, from the very rooftops, the immutable fact that the second movement is a magnificent scherzo in ternary form huh huh huh huh—huh! And! The movement shuddered to a fiery conclusion, not in its tonic key, but instead reached a final cadenza that led directly to the finale; so, so be it, king kitty king kitty king-kit! Bedit-bit-bit-bit, bitta!

Hippo!

Phineas reeled wildly backward with his hands flung askew all flying looking like dozens every one blurred down uncountable, and seeing himself flung all out this way he stepped forward and donned back his form to control himself, bringing the whole scene back into focus as Bonnie and Dorothy rose and rushed to join he and his Maestro at the piano keyboard.

Great job, Finnie! shouted the Maestro. Great lesson. You nailed it good!

What? Huh? No—

Come on. You nailed it. Don't you think you nailed it?

Nailed it? Don't fuck with my mind—you are nuts.

Oh yeah? How nuts am I that now, after practically no lessons, you played hell out of sonata twenty—even in your handicapped state! Great job!

I played nothing. Bonnie, Dorothy—tell him he's nuts.

I think so, said Bonnie—I think—

Rubbinschteen pounded the keyboard pounded them silent and covered them over with You are much too modest Finnie. And yes, it's incredible you can now play this way! It's so incredible, that, it's totally miraculous! So burn! And, like most common people with vision dimmed-down having had it drummed and drummed and drummed down into them that miracles cannot be, how do you react? Hah! You deny. Burn the flames!

Your minds block. Way down in you reaches the dark hand that your toxic education has planted in you and grips the master off switch one step short of your souls and it comes back up a great big No! that will not pass but the pressure builds and builds the music flames up higher higher, and higher more and more painful ripping tearing and splitting out never to expire No! after No! after—and you must believe the miracle wasn't he didn't play nothing he even denies it and simply because—such pain as this cannot have been for nothing. Nothing in creation dare cause such pain for nothing except Paganboy Pan himself or Christian B. Satan, at your service always, you know—and you cannot have just learned Satan controls you, so, you say—it did not happen. The Maestro is nuts. I am sorry. Really sorry.

Hand pressed to his chest, he sank three sizes smaller and motioned to the door with his left, and leaning heavily to the side supporting himself on the piano with his right.

Gage stood stonily in the sudden quiet. Dorothy took one step saying, Maestro—I don't think you're nuts. Don't say that.

Bonnie piped in with, If he's not nuts then what? A liar then? Finnie what do you think?

Gage stopped short of shrugging he was not a man who enjoyed admitting he'd been fooled or been made to look stupid—The Maestro spoke across the ladies saying, Bonnie and Dorothy—thank you so much at least for bringing me this fine Model D. I will use it in concert exclusively. I will think of you with every note I play here on in everything I play in your name and you, Finnie. I at least believed you achieved the needed virtuosity. You can go into the competition playing as you are, but you must play the entire sonata end to end, two days in a row, then one day off. Then two in a row again, one off again—and always have one of your wives present to tell you how it went like this one day Bonnie one day Dorothy one day off just Lydia in-the-weeds-to-the-side wakens watches there—there—why is the other me read what's not there eh eh eh, then one day Bonnie one day Lydia pressed-to-the-side-of-the-tunnel eh eh eh three more pounds on this chickie wickie and this train woulda zipped me down in line one another day off, but—my number two's name shot past again I knew it did I heard it too so just Bonnie-Lyd I no why Lanie-Lydia then again one day Lydia1 next day Lydia2 Got to try got to ask Mister Rubbinschteen hey hey hey this is Lydia is a copy of me in that scene roaring by hey but Gage just said I am sure you can imagine the next you can suss it out on your own you don't need no map Gage you don't need no map Bonnie you don't need no map Dorothy and certainly not if Lane and Lydia stop! stop! Gage am I in there? Did the author say to you say Lydia then and there and no other watching over the works eh Lyd did you just say that? Lane did the author write that? Dot Bonnie Lydia-san Lane-san hotsie-goosie bye bye love bye bye happiness why is the real Lane sitting outside reading that is it real or not real I was given the job to know I must know know kno kno kn kn k k k k k

k k k k everything's by now sucked through the tunnel just five seconds of a single pinsized red taillight-glow also gone and that is the end of it. Sighhh h h h h-h-h hhh hh h."

Lydia shut over the book and slumped into herself not knowing that she had just been torn in two and put back together or; the strain of pushing through the shit book had every ounce of her life force nearly sucked down to empty then partially filled then sucked down again; this repeated eighteen times at least, over. Can one die of strain that way? Have studies been done on the long and short-term effects of being forced to read aloud perfectly for prolonged periods, a flow of words the sight of which not to mention the sound of which if not let up on could do a body to death? When the end's in sight but kicks back out and then in sight again but kicks back out anda anda ho ho indaho indo outda ho ho ho.

Lane, who'd come into her booth leaned down when she opened her eyes and looked up.

You look bushed. That was a long one.

Sure was.

Come on. Dinner out. Where to Lyd? You deserve the choice.

Joel Chace

Non-Euclidean Ventures 6-15

6.

So, the second and the third Wedding Guests —
those not stopped, who never looked back —
what becomes of them, their progeny,
in an after all new age
when — glutted with plastic, one
by one — tiny albatrosses die?

Can weigh many ways

7.

It goes up and down, and there is a little

melody, and there is repetition.

Heaven Realm allows players to traverse space and time simultaneously, so making a 5-D concept

8.

Piece breaks off, drifts for an instant, mere, then returns
as certain desperate words will do, thank the Lord,
even if pale syllables, even if counting

to twelve again, so no more of that.
Yes, I do the exercises, and I shall try to do them better and better

9.

After I met the angels, the first human I saw
was my high school best friend, decapitated

in an accident. There he was, without his head.
I recognized him right away.

Baffled by the root meaning

10.

The doctors came in and said, "Impossible. You can't be speaking."

But I got a second opinion. Dr. Jesus said I could,
and I've been doing it ever since.

Genuine non-Euclidean venture

11.

There is an art to finding your way

by memory of what you've seen
when you were higher up. in the lower regions

Some childish holy of holies

12.

In Heaven realm, warfare
is ubiquitous,

so you can never know

when it will happen to you.

Malleus maleficarum

13.

I walked up through Heaven's green hill.

The grass

came all the way through my feet.

Confirmed in 2007: Hell exists and is eternal

14.

Her earthly remains
scattered

in several Spanish churches,
aside from one foot,

in Rome.

Clarity of this stone

15.

Another 500 yards from the Throne Room of God,
“Unclaimed Blessings.”
Legs hanging from the wall;

every part of one’s anatomy there in that room.

No everlasting torment in the Pentateuch

How to Float

Let your stuffed head, adrift after falling, drop back
and empty. Even if the Dead Sea is not dead

and not a sea, lie back and tilt your chin toward
John Brown's burying ground, keeping just

offshore. A very large vacuum on the table, near
the tea. Some humans float as though an angel

full of oxygen. The choir stilled, right through
your lungs. Some rotate into a vertical position

as though thirty miles from a coffin in a horizontal
position. Your body movements will rotate somebody

on land. A dress from an Ibsen play, a painting
of Salome carrying the head of John the Baptist

on a platter, the pencil that slept under Thoreau's
pillow. Underwater you hear ten times: *You're not*

the noises of your skull. The second act of *Doctor*
Zhivago. Stay alive by vibrating your chest

with no idea how to drink in the night. Old bicycle
maps in your travel bag. Some dolphins will

surrender to the fierce noises in your legs. If you're
human, eventually you will begin to rub your skull.

Stuffed with weather history. The strangest thing,
not to drown in private whale frequencies under

the pines. An anonymous angel full of oxygen, keep
telling yourself: *Not dying can be surreal.*

How to Count Fastidious Sheep

I blew air into the plastic dummy's mouth
many nights in motels. A sheep hates

to be alone. After each blackout, write
a botanist. Trust deep, dizzy-inducing

roots in Montana and Idaho. If you look
away, 70 percent of Americans will leave

a raccoon behind. Or separate the lambs
from the wolves from the John Updike

narrator. Use binoculars for the sleepless
that inhaled, exhaled, misspelled.

Consider some other sedative. Maybe
three bags of livestock fruit snacks.

I'm much stronger than you, say the Alps.
All the stoppage thrown into the head's

head. Watch. A sheep hates the plastic
dummy's unfamiliar mouth.

How to Control Bleeding

If you see blood, as I dream of often, grab
a shirt, towel, gazebo an hour after dark.
I choose solipsism to save a life past

the tree line. Don't fret about your tie, shoelaces,
forbearance. Open wounds an unlit, twisting
path to the Russian River. Researchers found

a tourniquet at a peak in the White Mountains,
an inch or so higher than the spectacle. *Death
in the heart or groin can visit in late September*

at 3 on a Tuesday, says the agreed-upon
physician. Blood spurting, pooling, soaking
Potrero Hill. *Send a picture*, Evyan wrote.

The temperature dropping. Until the bleeding stops
in stadium, school, or large building. *I learned
to swim the woozy fright*, I wrote, and I did.

Avoid getting blood on sugar maples and pink
granite. Spy on me constantly. *Uh-oh, babe,
you're in the E.R.*, says the GPS. Don't be afraid

to disappear. Blood strolling through Central Park
for months at a time. *Send a picture*, wrote
the Russian River. As silent and as far.

Dah

Fragmented

Aimless. Agitation.
I feel, in a word:
thirsty, forlorn,
melancholic.

To be nothing
but wind bored with
Autumn's waste:
composed or decomposed.

Inside, I curl up: fragmented,
incurable. Insatiable.
Slumped under bottom
-less moonlight. Between

beams, darkness shoots up.
Juxtaposing: black,
white. Gray:
dreams.

Today Will Be ...

Feelings are dust, scattered. This
distance between intentions,
moments. Motion. Rapture.
Everything loses. Intimacy. Pleasure.
How difficult this is without you.

Earthy nights: Verses. Rituals.
Impossibility, possible: my fingers,
are tongues. Each pulse: ripened rad-
iance: in you, from you, is
no longer mine.

The middle to the edge, the end,
we stepped. Fell. Wingless birds,
of words. Unbinding: the night's
indulgence. I surged, a storm:
you slid down, blue.

Is this anything worth wishing for?
Scent, touch. Lust: a slicing
blade. Kisses, dis-
solved. Holding on, useless:
today will be a long time ago.

Ian Ganassi

IN HER DREAM

...that pause of space which I call "father"

Wasn't necessarily what he or anyone made him out to be.

Still, she ran away. They wished she hadn't, because she mattered.

The secret of fathers is to make them what you want them to be.

She was dressed in rags, bowing and dancing with a queen,

Who didn't smell so great herself, and had an unpleasant complexion.

But despite the garlic breath, she was after all a queen.

Their tango took them in many directions.

...that pause of space which I call "father"

Was easily substituted with a mental image of the Duke.

She ran away. They wished she hadn't, because she mattered.

At least she didn't leave everything behind—she took a book.

She was dressed in rags, bowing and dancing with a queen,

This despite being "quite cured of seeking pleasure in society."

And even with her royal garlic breath, the queen was after all a queen.

She was neither a card nor a chess piece, but the real deal.

In the dream, that pause of space which I call "father"

Was very simply getting in everybody's way.

She ran away. They wished she hadn't, because it mattered.

The dapper mannerist said it was "all part of being 'fey'."

She was dressed in rags, bowing and dancing with a queen.

Her father stood behind the starting gate, smoking a Pall Mall.

But despite the queen's garlic breath, she was after all a queen.

They ran away, hand in hand, before the ash could fall.

In the dream, that pause of space which I call "father"

Lent neither a hand nor \$200 to his son the waif.

The waif's girlfriend ran away. They wished she hadn't, because she mattered.

His father said, "They make it nice." He replied, "Don't underestimate the mess they make."

She was dressed in rags, bowing and dancing with a queen.

There's not much to say about something so outré.

But despite her garlic breath, the queen was still a queen.
Everything will be fine, as long we can keep the soldiers at bay.

THE APPLE OF DISCORD

Accounts of the fall of Paris were burned in the streets of Troy, New York.
This had me worried for a while, then I took a deep breath.
Release the hounds thereof, man the ramparts.
Look back in anger, look back in shame.

A lesson in getting nowhere fast, without getting caught.
Generally speaking, no one can see the dark side of the moon.
The behavior you started out faking has become part of your personality.
Let's get together again sometime soon.

And the metal numbers on telephone poles.
This had me worried for a while, then I took a deeper breath.
Heave away my hearties, row row your boats.
Look back in anger, look back in shame.

What a good boy am I,
Generally speaking. No one can see the dark side of the moon.
We do things because we must, not because we want to.
Let's get together again sometime soon.

And whatever you do, don't take your lay in coats, or quotes.
This had me worried for a while, then I took a deep breath.
Something utterly trivial and of ultimate importance ruined my day.
Look back in anger, look back in shame.

Can I switch name tags with you Rich?
Generally speaking, no one can see the dark side of the moon.
I know it's a terrible thing to ask.
Let's get together again sometime soon.

Sometimes the best direction is to find the way out.
This had me worried for a while, then I took a deeper breath.
Yessir, Mr. GI Bill, get out the Uzis.
Look back in anger, look back in shame.

The windows continue absorbing your inflection.
Generally speaking, no one can see the dark side of the moon (except

the scientists).
Falling Glass Next Ten Miles.
Let's get together again sometime soon.

WANDERING DOWN

Take your time,
Take a letter, take it across town.

A letter framed in black,
Headed for the dead letter box.

Down in the valley it used to be better,
Cypress groves to wander about.

X marks the spot.

How's your credit and all that rot?

Part of me feels that it's too late.
But maybe it's always been too late.

The day has had lots of practice
At persisting 'til evening
When the shift changes.

Faced with extinction we did what we were told,
Or what we thought we were told.

It was difficult in the cold,
But waking we kept the candles lit.

And at the wake,
We ignored the warped relations,
For your information.

A tower of power, an observation tower.
The bread crumbs dropped, the picture cropped
So only the good parts show.

St. Lucy @ THE OPERA (LIFE on its own terms)

1.

Life's a big place or so i think
& "the river deepens when it gets down to the sea"
i hold my eyes on a plate
& hold up the world for an instant
this is beauty in the ugliest sense
& not some would be pretender-to-the-thrown
just trying to be grotesquely glamorous

Life's a big place
as i discovered just yesterday
& only sick people work in hospitals
& poetry like urine flow comes in streams
& sometimes you strain
& sometimes you don't
& sometimes you start
& sometimes stop & then sometimes
you start
again
sometimes you empty your bladder all at once
only to discover moments later
it was not fully emptied
& sometimes there's the sensation
of not having emptied completely
this can be referred to as incomplete emptying
frequency
intermittency
urgency
weak stream
straining noctura

in the evening i carry my eyes into the world
& am met by frequent sometimes urgent looks
sometimes looks of longing & lust
& sometimes looks of love &
hate
i am blind so what i cannot see cannot hurt
me & what my eyes see they no longer
share poet is a 4 letter word like love & lust &

fuck & hate & kill

Life is a big Place & sometimes the weather
determines my day
i can't believe that i'm so naive as to think that
by plucking out my eyes
men would no longer desire me
i can't believe that i'd ever say out loud that i'm
ashamed to be a human being
i can't believe i'd ever step into a subway car
on a cold & lovely eve
& there find a young & seemingly gentle &
handsome man
who offers to read me the signs
yes read them to me i say
first he reads a poem of spring & then he reads
that if ever i see anything suspicious
i should call the terrorism HOTLINE
that's 1-800-T-E-R-R-O-R-I-S-M
that's unlikely i say
& my heart's tongue whispers
read them to me again for LIFE
is a Big Place
& since i am blind
& since i cannot see i cannot really say for sure i've
ever seen these things before
oh
you may hold my plate for awhile
if you like

Life's A BIG place
& in this room without gravity
the clock tells us how much sunlight
an umbrella holds
weight is heavier than it seems
& my eyes grow sleepy

art is more important than man
it is our footprint
it reminds us we've been here
but even art remains only for as long as we allow it
hurricane flood fire & MAN

my eyes grow sleepy in their chambers
& in the chamber that is my mouth
there remains a dry line
where the ocean has receded
a picture of memory's movement
a stranded swimmer
after hrs my mouth opens
to expell the wind
that has been locked there like a
strongman's grip
unable to lift itself
or balance itself in accordance with the law
what is the law?
a rundown clock that barely gives the time
but somehow makes me feel that i've only just
arrived?
a wind that falls like stone
onto the swimmer's feet after a long day
of laps?
what is the law?
the circling breath of a man
caught within a gravitiless euphoria
heavy as a shadow that taps a melody as soundless
as a sunlit umbrella
on the concrete of a distant star?
rewinding the camera
without exposing the film?
winding the old victrola &
playing one's favorite tune?
not to kiss me if you are married?
not to flirt with greed
unless it means a meal ticket?
not to catch sunlight in your umbrella
but if you do please let it go
or save some for a time when the weather
might determine your day?
i must be falling in love
can i have my plate back now?

it takes the clock forever to move just minutes
in this room without gravity
it is stuck somewhere between time &
breath

this space i am in
feels a bit like being trapped within the petals
of the ranunculus
its folds enfolding me
& in its center lies a weightlessness
heavy as a star

i open my mouth to walk
& the timeline that is me rattles
like a tin can or a bell
i fall
i cough
i swallow doorknobs
& open the sounds that crawl inside my belly
my mouth grabs itself like an inhaling balloon
as i try unlocking the 1st gate

LIFE is a BIG PLACE

what is the law?
to stay afloat on this island for as long as i can
& never forget i'm in space
this is beauty in the ugliest sense

but now i will lift my eyes
& listen more closely to the OPERA
& never end singing with a
SONG.

2.
what is opera?

COMPOSER & LIBRETTIST
OVERTURE & FINALE
ARIA CHORUS & DUET

where are the words when we need them? trapped inside the mouth
like a draught in the ocean
& if the opera is a success we thank the composer
& if the opera is a flop we blame the libretto.

5/02/03 from fragments written 4/03

OCEANA, U.S.A. (for Ira Cohen)

“what is ripe bursts”

the day is so immense

the sky up ended

under sheer weight of clarity

sparrows & starlings bathe in the mud puddles that reflect their colors

(all that is left of the BRIGHTON BEACH BATHS)

at 50 the door opened for him

he with the consciousness of sparrows

drying themselves in the “sand”

“very de sica” she says “very bunuel” i chortle

the door opened for him at 50

it was an immense door

considering the small world he inhabited

he chose not to go thru

the day is immense clear

the sky opens

asks if we’ve been profiled yet

the bay i grew up on has changed some

there are less restrictions

less family values

more foreign language

the water is clear with many small fish schooling

it’s a cool water cotton candy mexican maraca day

a gay straight sparrow starling sailboat pigeon sea gull day

a native of & naturalized citizen of & illegal alien of

americanewyorkbrightonbeach day

humbling itself before the arrogant breath of the sun

the answer is the vortex

the question is the door

the sparrows & starlings they’d rather be around people than amongst them

brighton beach brooklyn, ny 8/26/00

THE FIRST CEMETERY of SPANISH & PORTUGUESE SYNOGOGUE (1656-1833)

inside chinatown's thigh
near the edge of st. james'
cross
by oliver street
& described as "OUTSIDE the CITY"
lies a dark acre of nameless tombstones
a sweet & sacrilegious monument
to judaism
consecrated in 1656
cornered by brick
& bridged by steel & clay
the ashes of ashes
the dust of dust
on this cold & dismal ash wednesday.

a triangle of empty benches
the prickly wild berry trees
lining the black wrought iron
speartipped gate

some secret inside the tombs
the vacant geometric forms
so worn & final

resting

"en un espacio pequeno y solemne
para Shearith Israel"

a remnant of
a prayer for the souls
of the wandering dead
who now repose
in god's new world

nyc 3/4/81

lancelot (for robert creeley)

"ain't goin down i ain't goin down i ain't goin' down to the well no
more...."

he sat there

deep in it

blood

scent of childhood still in his loins

the ankles horse's that is all one could see
thru the trees in the forest in the mud

of their own struggling moments before becoming history

listening to roland kirk's "gifts & messages"

what is ad lib how does one see who has the hippest chops in
the world

where does small flower whose aires concieved the things i love
most
have
already
become
history

there were only white kids in my public school so of course when warren chu
entered

the picture near the end of my stay before i discovered it was as is now
history i befriended

him immediately

tall thin basketball tall warren chu thick accent whose dad owned the laundry
on coney island

ave. where they lived in back of only chinese to live in neighborhood & only
other chinese

business was joy fong where we ate once a month & where mom forced dad to
order the pepper

steak every time never could figure out if he liked chinese food or the what &
where until very

much later in history of spare ribs being anything but spare ribs & i think i was warren chu's only friend for however long that lasted yet i remember nothing of our relationship except that i do believe it to be a warm one & that's all i remember & i do sincerely hope that it is enough to make a history.

“ain’t goin’ down ain’t goin’ down ain’t goin’ down to the well
no more...”

the air is so hot in here
 & danny's trumpet is really bothering me tonite
dull low hum flat sound
 buggering my boredom

i came as a favor to a friend yet i had to pay i will leave owing nothing
things hidden in various

lancelot strapped himself to a once wild chicken

all you could see were its legs from the knees down

in the mud thru the trees in the forest
lancelot

poor diminished bloody lancelet
 & his chicken
 did it ever imagine becoming history

& the elephants hyenas & squatters roaming around the forest

i wave my magic spare rib yet nothing disappears

i wave & i wave within a history of money changers with benevolent grins
in a time of mostly shoes

i suck on old crumbly lancelot's chicken's thorny hoof

& gallop away thirsting of death

".....ain't goin down no i ain't down ain't goin' down baby to the well no more."

"go down ole hannah don't ya rise no more
& if you do rise in the morning we're gonna meet on god's golden shore..."

nyc 1/13-14/01

the blood hustle (more than a lb. of flesh)

- "everything is somewhere
else."

- for gregory corso @ perazzo funeral
home

nice suit gregory
simple deep rich brown velveteen
your not-so-pale skin
not as tight as i expected
not as artificially seamless
though certainly
not you

your closed eyes
a cloudy mirror of repose
thoughtful lips
loose
&
relaxed
you stink of flowers
not
really you
a fat
rosiness in what should be
the hollows of your
cheeks
quite round & rosy
no cracks
but not really you

your vows of brutal beauty
though not broken
have been somewhat colored
by the undertaker

& your once scarring caresses
softened
by your not-quite cold, impenitent
flesh..

the obligatory pony ride

(passing your life around the room year by year / a series of photos / for a
soon to be book)

nyc 1/24-25/01

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO WYNTON (or TRUTH by OMISSION)

i'm sitting here listening to some opera on the radio from the time that opera
"died." that would be around the turn of the century about the same instance
that "jazz" was born.

in the final episode of wynton marsalis' series JaZz we are made to believe
that jazz died with duke ellington in 1974 and was resurrected with wynton
marsalis.

i'm sitting here listening to anthony braxton's town hall concert of 1972,
recorded a short time before the demise of jazz & wonder if its demise is what
led braxton to attempt to write opera.

o.k. so my thing's "the new thing" that grey area within the past 40 years that
according to marsalis as interpreted by his gabby hayes-like sidekick, ken
burns, never really existed.

that ragged portion of jazz history, that lunatic fringe that emerged in the
turbulent 60's for about a week, involved maybe a ½ dozen participants & just
as quickly disappeared, without adding anything to what the great roland kirk
(one figure sadly omitted from this false tapestry) termed as great black
classical music in his attempt, like the art ensemble's (where's the rest of them
ken?), to remove some stigma attached to the word JAZZ.

bird dies johnny griffin rises from his ashes...this 3rd meditation on race,
suggested to burns by marsalis during a lecture on the civil war, mentions all

our heroin addicted heroes & heroines & their sad ends, due in part to a racist society, but completely ignores, in the section on Bessie Smith, then empress of the blues, "student" of Ma Rainey, "teacher" of Billie Holiday, that Smith dies of the most blatant direct cause of racism. At the height of her career, after suffering severe injuries from a car accident, she was refused admittance into the closest hospital, a white hospital, and therefore bled to death before she could be treated by her "own kind." Ah the good old hypocritical oath... art forms are more readily accepted when they are transformed into commodities & most of the people in JAZZ, regardless of their finalities, were successful at one point or another. Not so the past 40 years unless fusion counts. AVANT-GARDE or FREE jazz does not exist because it does not exist in the marketplace. Sure, even Columbia Records makes a bid every 10 years or so to stick some "OUT" stuff on their label & then just as quickly drops them when they don't sell...tax write off?... Burton Greene in the 60's, Tim Berne, Arthur Blythe, who when asked in a radio interview while signed to Columbia & after changing to a more commercial style, why? simply stated "I've got to feed my family". Then there's Threadgill, David Murray, Cecil Taylor & their latest to be picked up & dropped David S. Ware, suggested to the company by Branford Marsalis himself. Branford, mediocre Trane/Rollins clone who had the nerve to bash Cecil in the documentary while Ken Burns who you know never even heard of C.T. allowed it to stay in to complete & compliment the taste of the unholy black conservative trinity of, Marsalis (Wynton), Murray (Albert), & that Judas to the music, Stanley Crouch....Regina Carter is she the only jazz violinist? Ask Ray Nance...stuff Smith...Leroy Jenkins...Billy Bang...Matt Maneri...or those Europeans like Stephan Grappelli who I guess didn't even play jazz. Right Django....hyperbole hyperbole hyperbole ...another title for the series can simply be THE RISE AND FALL OF JAZZ AS A COMMERCIAL VENUE.. which means no commerce no audience no merchandise sold therefore no existence ..I'm repeating myself as did the Armstrong / Ellington 19 hour extravaganza . I'll leave the real facts to the "real" historians & just present a partial list of glaring & not so glaring omissions from this deconstructed & rearranged history put together by excellent footage, some relevant some not, & vectored by a discursive false linearity & security based on this Louis/Duke equation.. as one friend, who came up in the 60's & played with one of the heroes of the film put it, "what's Louis Armstrong got to do with what we played." Well maybe a lot & maybe nothing but remember Louis was avant-garde too. But 15 minutes of one episode devoted to "Hello Dolly" instead of the relevance of the 60's jazz movement....give me a break. Hello, ESP Records. This is Louis, ESP Records. So nice to have you pop up when you did." Even Count Basie's band played an Ayler tune on one of its record dates.

so here's the list & as JAZZ would say, sorry for anyone living or dead we may have missed. .

' whatever happened to: eric dolphy, booker little, sun ra, lenny tristano, lee konitz, yusef lateef, blue note which hit the new note (right lorraine?), ayler, steve lacy, wes montgomery, andrew hill, all those europeans (even though that's not my area) , george russell, gunther schuller, kenny dorham, lee morgan, fats navarro, roy eldridge, art farmer, even chet baker. bud powell, mentioned as someone monk got busted with though he was monk's student & the second most important bop era pianist, loft jazz (you all know who you are), herbie nichols, randy weston (if for nothing else his synthesis of african & american rhythms), a host of women musicians who i sadly don't know anything about, cab calloway (or did i miss that one?) , black writers other than langston hughes, i.e. countee cullen, amiri baraka, jayne cortez, & ted joans who coined the terms "bird lives" & "jazz is my religion." BIRD LIVES didn't just pop up after parker's death as we are led to believe. lots of bop & pre-bop people who i'm not that knowledgeable of. horace tapscott..art pepper. that whole west coast contingency. tap as in dance.some newer folks although now i know you think i'm stretching it...william parker, roy campbell, daniel carter, sabir mateen, matthew shipp, charles gayle. more "old" guard like fred anderson, reggie workman, jimmy garrison & his extended soloshey where's milford & sonny murray? what happened to the rest of the chicago scene...sonny clark, more bill evans, wardell gray, soul jazz, bunny berrigan, benny carter, betty carter, lockjaw, male singers such as johnny hartman. hemphill, earl hines, earl garner, j.j. johnson, joe maneri, joe mcphree, sharrock, blood ulmer, rashied ali. sorry for all this messy out of sequence stuff.. i'm improvising.

links man links where are the links? i ain't misbehavin' i just want more links.

hey i just heard a rumor that wynton got dropped from columbia 'cause he wasn't selling enough...

yes folks, it's a wonderful world & music is the healing force...

nyc 2/2001

Jacob Kobina Ayiah Mensah

Ormolu

Everything that we eat from the oil rig to mortar will be mouthful, will be addressed with a curious, puzzled look and rushed from the stage, will be sped with impatient tongue, typified by a great oligarchy, will be oinked, followed by tears, no need to book. What we have left behind in your chamber are those letters in which you have spoken cheerfully with my gay heart, as crooked as old teeth behind old galleys, I stretch my arm to draw the curtain that will be enough to rescue the children with no parents from the trash after the fire.

Your grandfather gazes at you, trying to drive you to the top of your language, where I carry a small size of ant-brain, where I own your dance, where I have been recognized as irregular typeface, the floor is sinking, and your weight becomes very heavy in the hands gathered for prayers.

Somewhere I knead the dough for five minutes and the knee-high grass touches the roof.

R. Keith

Something fierce

The same nurse from yesterday shakes my arm and I'm startled awake in the hospital chair in my brother Ryley's room. I get up and walk out the room, putting the copy of *Animal Farm* in my duffle bag. *Don't let me catch you sleeping here again, you know visiting hours are over at eight.* She says that to me every time she does her rounds.

Outside at summer's dusk the weather is fine, so I'll spend the evening wandering around downtown collecting bottles until the recycle depot opens in the morning and I can have enough cash to buy some sandwiches and fruit out of the convenience store. When the Library opens I can fall asleep there until some security guard pokes me and I'll go back to the hospital and hang out with Ryley until they also kick me out again.

This has been the routine for nearly 25 years now. Pretty much every day. For the first few years my parents used to visit my brother. They'd wait in the hall outside his room until I left then come in to see him. After a while they stopped. Came on a couple of his birthdays. Then it was just my mom that came. Then only me. At least my dad still pays the hospital bills while Ryley is still in a coma.

25 years ago, I was turning 15. Ryley and I were very close. I followed him around like a shadow. Now I'm 40, him 42. His hair has grey streaks Mine hasn't turned yet.

Back then, I had a girlfriend. Tonya was her name. We dated for three months. When you're that age, three months is forever. When I wasn't hanging out with her, I was at home with Ryley. I was nearly 15, she 14. I don't know what she does now. I heard somewhere that she moved across the country to study reflexology, whatever that is.

Since Ryley's coma I gave up trying on life. My parents sent me to a cadet school and were going to enlist me in the military when I turned 17. When my dad came to my school to get me for x-mas break he told me in the car on the way home that the military would be the best place for me afterwards. I stayed at my parent's house a couple of days and then packed my duffle bag and just left.

Living this way is easier than you might think. I like to stay up for most of the night. I collect bottles and cans downtown, and turn them in at the recycle

depot. I can make twenty bucks, sometimes thirty in a day. Or night I should say. It's enough for some food out of the convenience store. Now and then I'll grab something from the hospital cafeteria and bring it up to Ryley's room when we're hanging out. I catch a nap at the library, then I usually fall asleep when I'm reading *Animal Farm* out loud to Ryley.

I don't consider myself homeless. I don't beg for change on the street or sleep on cardboard under a bridge or whatever. I don't hang out with those kind of people. Nothing against anyone who lives that way, it's just not what I do. I stay clean shaven and catch a shower in Ryley's bathroom. Someone always replaces the soap in the bathroom that I use. It's never a problem. Every couple of weeks I go to the laundromat. If I have some extra coins, the laundromat has a couple of those old school arcade games, I play a few rounds as my clothes spin around the washing machine.

Way back when, Tonya and I had an argument. I can't even remember what it was about. She flipped out and broke up with me. Of course I was down for a few days, a week maybe. I was 14.

I remember at school the other kids around my grade would snicker at me in the hall, in class, anywhere I went. Something was up. I had no idea what. This went on for a few days when finally one of Tonya's friends told me that my brother had slept with Tonya. Of course I was stunned something fierce. What the fuck.

I found Ryley outside the school sitting on a bench against the wall of the building and slammed his head into the brick wall I don't know how many times. His body slumped over and he fell off the bench onto the ground.

I remember being in the principal's office, then some police came, then my parents. After that I was sent to that cadet school. I didn't even learn that Ryley was in the hospital in a coma until some months after. I thought I had just knocked him out. He'd come to in a few minutes. Then I'd really kick his ass. I don't really know what would have happened after that.

If I remember right, I was twenty or twenty-two. Twenty-something. Tonya came into my brother's room. She had a cactus in a little brown flower pot and set it on the table. I didn't say anything to her. She told me that she never actually slept with my brother. She just told a few of her friends at school that she did, and they told others, and others told others and on and on. I think she might have said sorry at some point. I just sat in there chair looking at Ryley. Before she left she told me *If you need anything just gimme a call, Bryan*. As if I had a phone. As if I needed anything from her.

So, this is how I got to where I am. Where my life is. This is how everything turned out. My life is quite easy the way it is, though I'm waiting for the day that my brother wakes up. Will my parents talk to me again when that happens? How will he catch up on the 25 years that he's missed out on. I know I'd have to make some changes in my life and routine when he wakes up but that's not really any concern. What matters is that he wakes up and we can put the past behind us. Would he even remember how he got here, what happened? Does he know I'm here every day, can he hear me reading Animal Farm to him?

I'm shaken awake and expect the usual nurse to yell at me to get out because visiting hours are over and not to sleep here like she barks at me every time. I snap back and it's not the nurse. What I see is my mother's face. *You can't sleep in all day, I don't care if it's Sunday, get up! Go outside get some fresh air.*

Sitting up in my bed, I watch my mother leave my bedroom door open as she leaves. *Ryley, take your little brother outside for a while, go do something. Both of you.*

The mirror in the hallway, I look at my reflection. I slept in my Soundgarden t-shirt that I thought Tonya stole back when I was 14. Ryley's reflection behind me. Where is his grey hair? He looks the way he did when he was 17. *We'll hang out at the mall, come on.*

I'm walking. Walking with my brother who has been in a coma for a quarter of a century now. I'm 14. Again. Why? ...what is this?

At the mall my brother gets us cans of 7-up at the kiosk that sells newspapers, magazines, cigarettes. The date on today's paper is August 8th, 1994. Ryley hands me a can. *Why are you so quiet today?*

We wander around the mall, like we used to back when we were teenagers. But we are teenagers. But I'm homeless. I'm 40. You're in a coma in the hospital. But we're lingering aimless in the mall like it's '94. It is '94.

There was no magic lamp. No genie popped out of anything. No Zoltar Speaks machine. No wish granted. No Mr. Peabody, no boy Sherman, no Way Back Machine. No DeLorean. My mother who hasn't spoken to me in two decades woke me up today to kick me out of the house for a while.

We wander around the mall until Ryley says he's gotta piss something fierce. I wait for him outside in the food court and realize in two days Tonya and I fight about ...something. She breaks up with me. Then I bash my brother's head in and he goes into a coma.

This is all in my head. This isn't real. Tomorrow the nurse will wake me up. I'll be in the chair in my brother's room at the hospital. She'll bark at me to get out. I'll come back the next day. And the next. Like I always have.

Back at the house my mother yells at us something fierce for eating at Wok & Taco in the mall. She had prepared macaroni and bacon and told us to put it away when it cooled down, and to run the dishwasher. Ryley and I spent the rest of the night playing Super Nintendo and drinking kool aid until I passed out on the couch in my dad's den, which he never even uses because my brother and I took it over.

This is totally strange. I'm 14 going on 41. But I'm back with my brother. I can change things. If I'm still around here tomorrow. Where ever this here is. Or whenever. I know where things can lead to. Where people will end up. I know the outcome. Now I can avoid it.

On the couch where I passed out last night Tonya pounces on me, waking me up. *Get up already.* Her mouth presses against mine. My eyes stay wide, as I remember she had bleach blonde bangs that made her look like a sheepdog. Her hands flow on me in all different directions. All I can think of is Am I 40 or 14 now? She tells me my parents left for work and Ryley is in first period in school now. We have the house to ourselves.

Her hands are all over me. This is the day we argue about I don't remember what. She hands me a peppermint from out of her pocket. I forgot we used to do that. I'd put a mint in my mouth and go down on her, then she'd do the same to me. Gave it all a tingly sensation. I usually finished pretty quick and came something fierce.

I pull her off me and tell her *Listen, I ...I wanna break up.* What I expect is a bouquet of screams out of her mouth. All she says is *Why?* I lie to her and tell her that dad is putting me in Cadet Camp. *I leave in a few days. It's for two years, then they want to put me in some Military school afterwards. I can't ask you to wait that long for me to ...* I hear her sniveling as she goes towards the front door of the house and slams it something fierce behind her.

I stay at my parent's house all day alone. Why should I go to grade eight

classes when I'm 40? The things I learnt in those classes didn't get me anywhere...or they won't in the future...or whatever happens next in whatever place I'm in right now.

In my brother's room I find the copy of *Animal Farm* and sit out on the back deck drinking coffee until I hear the front door slam shut again. Ryley comes out *Hey runt, what are you reading that shit for?* and asks why I didn't go to class today. *Uh...yeah, umm Tonya and I split today, I wanted time to uh...think and....you know?*

We eat microwaved macaroni and bacon. *I thought you hated coffee something fierce and you're drinking it black now?* I tell my brother *I guess I've developed a more adult taste...*

We hang out in the mall again like we did when we were teenagers. This was where I would come if it was raining outside, or if it was too hot to be outside, back when I was 40.

Tonya parent's car is parked in the drive way of my parent's house when Ryley and I get back. As soon as I open the front door our mom asks me to come into the living room. Tonya's parents and my mom are on the chesterfield and my mom tells me to sit down on the love seat. Tonya's parents just sit there without saying anything. My mom tells me that Tonya is in the hospital. She had cut her arm with a piece of broken mirror in the washroom at school earlier today. *Anything happen between you two this morning? Tonya's mom tells me she came here this morning.* I look at the carpet and say that we split up today. *She didn't seem to take it that hard but she left right away...*

Her parents and my mom stay sitting on the chesterfield as her mom cries and cries with her husband and my mom trying to comfort her. I keep staring at the carpet. All I really want to do is play Super Nintendo with my brother and not be here. Not be 14. But not be 40 either.

On the kitchen counter the next day there's a note saying which room Tonya is in, in the hospital. Of course it's the same room that my brother was in when he was in a coma. Or will be in a coma, or I can prevent him from being in that room. Of course she's in the same room. Why wouldn't it be the same room? Everything else about this situation is bizarre, just one more thing to add to the list. I figure that I'm not going to bother going to see Tonya. If she's in the hospital now, she won't be able to sleep with Ryley if she did that or not. Or is going to or not.

What will I do now? If this is some sort of second chance. Why do I get one?

How to make up for the lost time? I am 40. I am 14. I can do stupid things and get away with anything because I am 14. I get a slap on the wrist. Because I'm 40 I don't really care to do anything that would bring trouble for me.

What if my brother's coma was all in my head. I haven't been 40. I haven't been a day over 14. Can a person dream so vividly? Make up 25 years of the future in their head? If that's the case should I have broken up with Tonya? This can't be. I never would have thought that my parents would stop talking to me. But they did. Now I don't know if that's what really happened, or if it's something I made up.

What would make me dream of Ryley in a coma?

If that is the real dream what do I do now? To make things right? Was this dream just a warning of some kind?

Which outcome is real?

Could it have been me that went into a coma? I dreamed everything up as I was out, and now everyone is trying to act normal like it never happened?

I'm in my bed and I can't really sleep. I want to be around Ryley in case anything happens. He's going to think it's weird if I'm trying to babysit him. He'll skip classes with me for a day. Maybe two. What then?

In the morning I'm shook awake by my brother. *Dad drove mom to work, she left her car so I can take you to visit Tonya.* I tell him that I don't want to see her. *What kinda shitty boyfriend are you, what the fuck's wrong with you?* I tell my brother that I'd rather just cruise around with him, that Tonya and I split up yesterday. *So, you still care about her, right? Get dressed and I'll take you there.*

I say I'd rather not see her in the hospital. He asks me if I care about her or not. I reply *Maybe*. Ryley sighs and says *Maybe is the nice way of saying No*.

We drove around aimlessly throughout town in mom's car. What else was there to do? When I was pushing 40 I thought I missed being younger. I guess I forgot how boring it can be and the mundane things you did to entertain yourself. We pulled up to a self-serve gas station, two cadets in uniform were hanging around outside the gas station. Ryley told me to put twenty bucks worth of gas in the car. I'm pumping the gas, watching an old man...what

would be an old man to me if I am 14...push a shopping cart full of cans and bottles up to the curb and he sits down at the locked up cooler that stores bags of ice. The sun has weathered his face something fierce, his nose looks like raw hamburger.

Ryley comes out of the gas station with a six pack of 7-up and hands me a can. He opens his and chugs a bunch of it back. *Look at that fucking loser with his shopping cart, why doesn't he just get a job.* I don't reply to what my brother just said. He opens the driver's side door and hurls what's left in his 7-up can at the man with the shopping cart. *Recycle thiiiiiiis!*

Ryley totally missed when he flung the can at the man with the cart, but that's not really the point. When he stands up and starts walking towards mom's car my brother says *What do you think you're gonna do, old man? Don't you have trash to pick through, you fucking loser?* Ryley shuts the car door, he has the 6-pack ring with 4 full cans in his hand. *Get the fuck out of here.* My brother swings the cans at him when he comes closer, again missing completely.

Ryley is on the pavement. I'm in the car, watching the old man who is watching the two cadets working over Ryley. The cadets both stand up. One gives a can of 7-up to the other before helping himself to one. The old man pushes his shopping cart off in the distance.

Do you need me to call someone? I hear through the car window. The gas station attendant looking in on me from outside mom's car.

I watch an ambulance take Ryley away. I pull one of the last cans from the 6-pack. A handful of flyers from the Cadet corps lay on the curb near where the man with the shopping cart full of bottles and cans sat down. Join now! Leadership. Character Building. Academic Excellence. Choose your future.

Kafka Calling

Kafka called, said, 'visit Borges.'
'But you're both dead,' I said.
'So what?' he said, 'go.'

Hitched a ride on a flight of crows
angling south,
landed in a maze of streets,
everyone in masks, their eyes
rolling like thunder,
hailed a cab, felt like I was
crawling inside an egg,
passed by some buildings beginning to panic,
came to a lurching stop,
luckily I had a bag of raspberries,
knocked on the door — smooth
as the back of a violin — was
greeted by Borges, or someone becoming Borges,
who brought me into the library
where, above a sleeping panther,
books were singing on the shelves.

Echoes

She screamed
until
the sirens stopped.

Marionettes hang
from strings
tonight.

an arm
a battle
both
lost

I spit
into the
eagle's mouth

My scars
are
my stories.

Splendors Beyond the Grass

I used to crave twilights on your tits, waiting for any superhero in a condom. You were the naughty tongue of full-moons back then, spreading love into my universe, perched on a desert of thighs. But I don't visit the park as frequently as I used to anymore. I've found other ways to satisfy my wet-dreams with other men after sunset, away from the nine-to-five in Gotham City.

*

But it's funny how the scents beyond the grassy knoll haunts me every day: Drakkar Noir, Rabanne, Obsession, Dior. In fact, I carry samples of them in my car, and use them to supplement my moods. The cheap and the pricey. The usual enhancements for anonymous play. But my games will always be on trial in the court of my conscience.

*

Perhaps I fell in love with the solitude of a forest in childhood, after running away from slammed doors at home. Or perhaps I became a dreamer among the owls back there, a stargazer, an astronomer of sorts, connecting points in the night-sky, to displace my body from the burden of thirst, hunger, and other deliriums I would play with in a series of foster homes.

Mary Cresswell

SESTINA LENTE

I hear the dreaded word sestina
slope casually across the room
Someone says, *Cool, I'll write three tonight*
someone smirks, *You bet, piece of cake.*
My heart sinks down
my soul shrivels up a little more.

There's still hope. They haven't locked the door.
But stop! Within a
second, they do. It's too late.
Here I stay and here I write
(last time I tried this, it was gloom and bloody doom
and wishing I was miles away from town).

My better judgement says, put the pencil down
go far away from here – farther, even more
to days of wine and roses, souvlaki and retsina
where no one cares what poetry I make.
I wouldn't write at all, if I were really bright
and not so ready to presume

skill with villanelle, rondeau redoublé, pantoum
or other verse forms sent to skim
the human heart, to make it cry encore
and dance discreetly its own tarantina
instead of being always on the ache.
What I write tonight

should raise the spirit to a wondrous height
not wallow in existential gloom
not have rhymes like a dog's dinner
not tempt my friends to show me the door
and never let me come back in
till I ingratiate

myself by writing what the rule book says is great.
Is that what I am destined for tonight?
Damn. Am I the author of my doom?
I never should have touched a pencil or a pen

without knowing more
about the art of the sestina.

But I have never met a verse form that I truly hate
so perhaps I should assume I've finally gotten something right –
and this will be the last time I sit down and try once more.

A VILLANELLE, AS WELL

If it rattles on like hell
it's not a ballad or a verse
it's a villanelle

What's that silly smell
coming from my purse?
it rattles on like hell

And drives me up the wall
or maybe even worse
yes, it's a villanelle

I always know to tell
to rant and rave and curse
that which rattles on like hell

And leaves me but a shell
and panting for divorce
from the dreaded villanelle

Will it save me? yes, it shall
preserve me from the monster's curse
It will rattle on its way to hell
that misbegotten villanelle.

Jack Galmitz

Conversations

"It's not a movie."

"It feels like one."

"Maybe, but it's real."

"You can rewind it and watch the parts you like best or worst."

"Yeah, but going over memories changes them."

"Does it? I haven't found that to be so."

"I don't know. I read that somewhere. It sounded right."

"I used to love the movies. Not so much anymore."

"What changed?"

"I did. I got older. Novelty isn't so important."

"Yeah. I know what you mean."

*

I lowered the car radio.

"Dad, I'm worried."

"What's the matter, son?"

We were passing through the stores in the small town we lived in.

"Dad, I have no feelings. I can't feel anything."

I felt a bit relieved having said something after such a long time.

"It's been going on for years and it's gradually getting worse. I feel like something's the matter with me."

I waited for a reply. After all, I hardly ever confided in my father anymore and this was something serious.

I waited as he drove and stopped at red lights or stop signs.

I waited as he gave people crossing the street the right of way.

I waited and nothing happened.

He never said another word. It was as if my admission that I had an emotional problem was not something to discuss.

Eventually, we reached home in silence.

*

The morning nurse came in.

"What are you doing in your street clothes?"

"It's freezing in here. I can't take the cold one minute more."

"You can't wear your own clothes in here. You have to put on the hospital gown."

"Here's a pair of bottoms."

The bottoms were so tight they could hardly snap shut around my stomach.

"And you've got to keep those monitor leads on you."

"Look, I'm not an animal in a lab. I refuse to keep these damn leads on me all the time. I can't move with them on me."

"If you remove this section of the leads, you can walk a few steps over to the chair. You can do that every few hours."

"I'm telling you I can't take any more of this."

"Do you know where you are?"

"The hospital."

"Do you know what day it is?"

"How could I? I have no reference points to know that- no television, no newspaper, no computer, no one to talk to for over twenty hours each day."

Anton Yakovlev

CHICKEN

Like any other day, the country was troubled,
flapping its upside-down flags from the shotgun poles.
We needed to test how much we meant to each other
and drove each other off the cliff. The corpse
we landed on didn't smell yet, which was bizarre,
as it had lain there for at least two hundred
years, and even longer according to some.
Windshield wipers waved relentlessly,
and beauty never came to the rescue.
Years later, the dog keeps whistling.
Who won? Unrequited rhetorical
questions provide their own orgasm.

SINCE HIS SUICIDE

You said we were all better off I couldn't recall
his eyes My cheapest rental
up the gravel road Hanging
by fire forever I saw him in skeleton sweat
Noose on his neck Tourists gathered
screaming reviews He used to bark to himself
Flooded the streets Now you told me
we all missed him too much Your sunglasses gleamed
Fire under the door His body shaking

EUROPEAN HISTORY IN SYMBOLS

Guillotine here
guillotine there

and there

and there

and there

and here
and here

and here

and

B. J. Muirhead

Epistles

To the fearful

You could be forgiven for what you have become:
no more than worshippers of beliefs that hide
deepest fears, stretched to incongruity, hidden like
hermits dancing in skulls, covered with cracks no
light can reveal, but which shatter before strangers

On their way to death, you will join hands,
remember bodies loved, caressed, fucked as though
to overwhelm everything for which you demand
forgiveness,

As though anyone but you can forgive the actions
fear has drawn across your life.

To the believers

When Nietzsche said I was dead he was overstating
my existence, an ontology of which would be
empty, a null event not unlike the ghost whispering

To the shallow prey of your daily thought with
which you stalk and destroy everything you may
yet become

Which is difficult: to become who you are is our
task, he said; and I am not dead but absent, have
chanced upon who I am.

And I am no longer the whip you use to charge
others with your fear. No. I am the absence you
must understand if I am to be found to be who I am.

But that also is an overstatement. Nietzsche would
approve.

Nina Živančević

I Made Up My Mind : I'm definitely Leaving NYC

Because I'm tired of looking at sky in rectangular concrete chips,
Because F.Scott Fitzgerald & Mr.West were starving for two years while
Diving in a swimming pool
Because I'm not Greta Garbo and I don't want to be alone
In my Brooklyn chicken-poxed incense impregnated \$7.000000 a month
apartment
Because the Marx brothers are not doing Animal Crackers this year on
Broadway, no rip ridin' Will Rogers sermonizing for Flo Ziegfeld
Because the porcelain blue sky is hard to find aside from the air in b'twn
Why poor slum downtown reflects the cruel sins of my admirers
When it's dawning in the blissful blessing of my aspirins
New Year's Day
Ding dong ding dong!
Twenty months of break dancing
In twenty moths three periods missing due to tingling poisonous metal effect
Of Avenue Mayor Koch gentrification
I am not Atlas in Rockefeller Center! But I am not Lana Turner either;
Thirty first is dead! Out with a zero and into the orbit-
There is a day tender as saffron: TODAY
Now that all of the pages are gone from my detective murder mystery
Calendar pastiche, the thing just says the word "today"
White letters on black cardboard, with a capital T., NYC
I am tremendously worried by my constant lack of Him
It was temporarily relief, a little night work because I can't sleep
Because there are too many things that bother me like why do we
Have to live like rats? No Fred & Adele in taps over on 42nd & Sunset Blvd.,

Gloria Swanson got \$900000 from Paramount in 1934
While I earn- "I don' even want to mention that" and
Lana Turner had too many genuine fits for poodles and
Liz Taylor had 900 fur coats but did not overdose like Judy
Garland of the flowers!
And God bless Betty Ford, Happy Rockefeller, DeWolf Hopper
Abbe who says "Everybody's gonna die for Nicaragua, but they
Won't bury even their next door neighbor",
What a bunch of horseshit lined 2nd Avenue in 1934 when
Gentlemen took the curbside for ladies and
Gentlemen please welcome
This new year,
It's a pleasure to be here I've made up my mind I'm definitively leaving
(I stole that from Groucho I guess)

*on New Year's eve in Holy-wood,
3 hours before Steve de Souza's party*

Alba avis
(for Claude*)

*Aliéna ne cures!
Aliéna negotia non curare...*

And you take care of the aliens,
Of their alien wishes and affairs,
What thunder has struck your
Hollow brow?
Your thought

Dwelling between a void and
Latin quotations, my clear alien
Friend whom I befriended in
The most alien hour of my
Late springtime ...
There is a fountain in Rome
Where the young brides used to drink water
So that they could have just sons;

If you're not my belated father, then
You are probably my new-born son,
Caught in the web of summer insects
Craving for the morning light...

When the dinner's over
And the stories got burnt to ashes,
We leave messages to one another:
That the wax had melted down,
That the bulls got pierced by sunshine
That the wine's red and the crystal transparent
We say so many things
But the silence remains
While at the same time encouraging us to ride on
As we had already mounted
That melancholy horse again...

**"Claudius, the one who's always closed"*

Elysian Fields of Power

(For Stephanette, Ivana eventually)

So, Tiny Tom and Speedy Gonzales
Have had a Lab,
It was pretty much a physical thing,
They tried to outdo the topology of a body in space
From person A to person B ran the 'power-field of
a person', so, how would we envelope them
into our power-circle, if we were to say
'I'm taking over a situation'?
then
You would say 'I don't want to take a person
In my power-field, I want them to be free,
And besides, I'm not Pina Bausch or Vito Acconci',

Documentation is more a referent than a remainder
And performance means
There's an audience,
An event is an accident sometimes
And sometimes it's steady and sleepy, like a video;
There may be people or not
A couple of technical by-products
But what always really counts is people
Who make decision whether
to be there or not to be
as we're making a private
out of their public space
and

not everyone can get it...
we are just trying to become these buildings
themselves, a part of the architectural landscape,
surroundings which is
the other

A limine

(should I refuse it from the start?)

For Eric-(Aesotheric) Lerner

Perhaps I should say 'no' from the start
To this lonely year full of scaffolds
When energy flows in and out,
Like cold water oozing through a faucet;
Icy rain and snowfields, mangos for
Breakfast for our sparkling imagination,
-this is my second poem for you, my
Long-standing pal of abused poetry,
I see you in a workshop of good manners
And bad intentions, you would not shave
And hated washing your hair, and I was
Always there, absent-minded,
Trying to bring several friends back to life,
Those who appeared, but then disappeared in
The daily theatre of our vowels
And rusty consonants full of smoke.
One of them had a stroke,
And another one a jaw cancer, and the third one,

Oh, that one never died.
He ate daisies and cucumbers for lunch, and
I spoke to him in person, while I was dwelling
High, above in the sky.
You say you miss him a lot, I say: it's fabulous
That we've ever met, appeared and then disappeared
On the sunny side of the street; it's snowing a lot
Around here and all the smudges
Around my eyes remain prominent and natural by now...
There is no other Christmas gift for you
But this song and you know its special tune
So
you
can
sing
it

Rollerskating Notes

It is so much better to get a pair of roller-skates
and set a poem free,
it is so much more interesting to see some friends once a year,
it is so much mucho painful to see some people every day
it is certainly much more subliminal to be left alone
write diaries or read an airconditioned Blaise Cendrars,
it is certainly much more useful to lie down, not
move, touch the earth, kiss the floor, embrace the door and

much more
perhaps just howl or hold someone dear to you,
it is certainly much more practical to fumble through invoices,
legal documents or unfinished galleys of a commercial publisher,
it is certainly much more satisfying to sit on a Kandahar balcony,
patting an Afghani hound in a lazy crystalline afternoon dusk,
it is certainly much more romantic to be Dracula's lover or
Voltaire's fellow-talker in a European gloomy castle,
or drink beer at CBGB's with your ball chain and leather
psychedelic pals,
evidently, it takes much more effort to sign petitions
to set prisoners free, write phony mail
to iron-curtain cordial officials or answer useless or urgent
calls when your heart is on fire,
and it's even more prestigious to keep up with the Tennessee
Song Lyrics contests or with scoops of the news from various
organizational gatherings claiming that you can still
print whatever you think
about the guy who stopped me on a street this morning
yelling out prophetic words at me and the one
I remembered was meant to hit me hard
below every inch of the belt
IF YOU wanna skate, he said,
YOU HAVE TO HAVE AN ATTITUDE
and this glorious city, smaller than life,
will not let your poem
fly away with that one

Gregory Kimbrell

CHJUCATU

Master, I still dream

of snow like food in
the dying month. You

are under the sand.

Your dogs planted a
drop of snow in

my eyes so the color

faded. Now that this

frost has me you are

the only death I
want. Can you eat me?

I am the reason

you are beautiful.

~

You scream in the cold

that I, a demon
of low ideas,

trap people. People

have shadows sleeping
in them, I tell you,

and in the cosmos

of dreams my red eyes

see dogs dead in dark
offices. Your life,

blue-eyed one, is mine.

~

You will not receive

death from me like cream
melted in darkness.

My mind is a fat

winter cloud with the
patience to empty

itself. There is no

door, manslayer, between
you and me. Those who

live transform themselves,

and I am ready

to see you break out

of your snowy skin
and bloom.

~

The flower
of cubic pyrite

lying dead inside
you wants life. I hope

you like fantasies

because this golden
pyramid is full.

Sickness is a toy

here. You will not sleep.

Hollow Dog's Eyes

[Through] the puncture [in the curtain,] I look [down] on the [rooftop] garden,
[where] Lito sprays a solution of gadolinium and water to [remove] frost [from]
the berries [he calls his] children. The smell of catfish cooking [makes my nose
run. This is no bad [dream] standing [watch at the barred] door. [I must] swallow
[my] error[:] The bullet did damage, [but while] I have not [yet been] arrested,
Kyurisu lives. There are [as] many forms of despair [as there are microscopic]
pink insects in the moisture [that clings to] the neon light[.] And which is the
correct line for walking [through] the fog to [my] original life[?] A curse [travels]
on the ground and up [the wall] to smile [at me] in the cold glass.

In Metal Harbor

[Faith's] hidden fruit is hard and white, but cooked with the skin on, for two
nights, only in [silver] moonlight, it [becomes] a copy of the [heart], invisible to
the devil lukari. He [thinks] that he [holds] the [real thing], raw materials for
[his] death system, but the dog cannot reduce a name to a pair of gray-green
[mummified] pig's [testicles.] Stars the color of [electronic] script [flash over] the
Seto Road as the [persimmons] freeze. [When] I wake, I [feel weak.] These
tellurium oyster dreams are [no] good for the brain. [While] I [know] I am not
permanent[,] I do not want [ever] to be a landscape recovered by [the army of]
the religious[.] Spring is the door[.] Winter is the key. Everything [else] ends up
[stuck] in the teeth[.]

The Armor Remembers

I must not mix the feed / for the horse Doakara / with Tshinosabu's meal

But I believe Sima lied when he said / he had not cracked the egg

//

The city which awaits evening / dreams like a dog / with the head of a cat held
in its paws

//

Men of low quality gather / by the fields / where their buyers leave payment /
in the black kettle

They lift their hands / with fish meat caked beneath the cracked nails

//

//

When the heavens open / Tshinosabu wakes / in the heap of new corn / and
fills the mouth of his goat head

His clean male torso tightens / around my error

//

Those who speak on behalf of the elders / will not be spared the contest / as the
red clouds bleed

The eye is a perfect circle

//

//

//

Tshinosabu lays against me / two soft warm balls / that must be emptied

The dryness of the egg / must be restored

//

I fasten the leather harness / used by breeders / and empty myself

The death of the wrath has come / over animal hair

//

//

Tshinosabu speaks

I transfer into you / who are my private container / the vomesshu / my seed of
resolve

Have a little sleep / a wedding / with me

No one will lie to you again

//

Dreams are shattered by experience / I refine you in my fire / before the city of
Tsheyii / where the presence of the great satellite / on the hook of night /
summons us home

This continues to be / the land of the faithful

Bathhouse/Paint by Number

Face to face with a devil,
be present
and watch for hot spots.

Be seen
as willing to risk
money, semen, infection.

Talk about tomorrow
as though it were a side street
to leave unexplored.

~

Beheading a devil
does not make a hero.

In days named for dogs,
drinking the cum
of someone you met at the bistro
may not be as bad
as the consequences of not doing it.

Lying on blue tiles
like a couple of dead birds,
the instrument and its player
feign indifference, satiety,
anything.

Mountains are divided
by well worn roads.

~

The attraction of the wrong
is like that of a prophet.

Evil cannot talk about its origins,
only its game.

Technology is not needed
to see the heart beneath the wolf skin.

Remove it, then drink,
ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha
ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha...

Hectare.
Hectare.
Hectare.

Get the picture?

Cameron Lowe

Rim

One imagines himself/addressing his peers/I suppose.

—George Oppen

Slid the candle a hand's-width
left along the table &
studied
the twist of flame in glass
& the lights beyond.

Correspondence

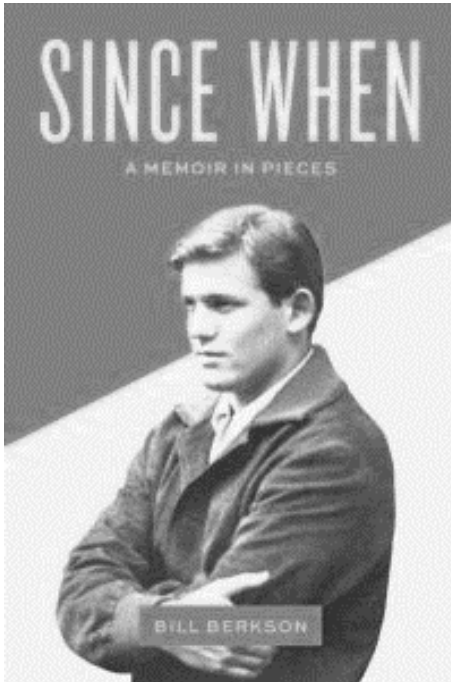
—after Lee Harwood

The night opens stays open a letter
marked *Par avion* no brooch

for the artful no lake
reflecting the woods—

 Only leaves rain-slick
in streetlight winter's postcard

plain enough to say *yes*
"brushing through"



Pat Nolan

Some Assembly Required

Bill Berkson's "Memoir In Pieces"

Since When, A Memoir In Pieces

Bill Berkson,

288 pages

\$17.95 (paper)

Coffee House Press, November

2018

When talking about Bill Berkson certain assumptions must be addressed. That he was a quintessential New Yorker who had escaped to California and created a niche for himself among artists and writers on the "shaggy and rustic" West Coast while maintaining a certain Atlantic savoir faire. With classic good looks and aristocrat bearing, that he was a knowledgeable esthete of impeccable taste. That he was not of the musty academic or dyspeptic grammarian persuasion but someone attuned to the dynamic of a modernism intent on creative reassessment. That schooled in the fashionable at his mother's knee, as an adult he cast a discerning eye on the world of art and chose poetry. That with Berkson there always seemed to be a plan.

Since When, the title of Bill Berkson's 2018 "Memoir In Pieces" from Coffee House Press can be heard as a challenge to a change in circumstances as well as a question as to a specific time or starting point. Berkson had a penchant for these pocket tropes rife with quotidian ambiguity as exemplified by previous book titles: *Same Here*, *Repeat After Me*, *Expect Delays*, and *Recent Visitors*. *Expect Delays*, his last poetry selection from Coffee House Press, echoes the Breton, Char, Eluard collaboration *Relantir Travaux* and is well reinforced by large digital signs wherever road crews are at work. *Recent Visitors* was appropriated from the back pages of pre-Lilly bequest Poetry Magazine. Berkson learned to unpack the potential of seemingly bland common usage from Kenneth Koch who put him through his poetry paces at The New School in Manhattan in the

60's. This fondness for the stealth idiom resonant with ambiguity became one of the characteristics of Berkson's poetry in that familiar usage belying its common meaning, the result of linguistic drift as the splice of hybridized morphemes, produced unique declarations. But then, as this neo-Goncourtian encapsulation of scenes and episodes reveals, Berkson's interest were not limited to literature.

The first forty pages of *Since When* are an autobiographical portrait of a somewhat privileged upbringing in a fashionable world of glamour and refined sensibilities, and the access it allowed to a jet setting strata of New York society. That sense of entrée is the key that allows Berkson to open doors for himself in search of that esthetic yet obscure object of desire, the quest for a truth in the realm of taste. Born in Manhattan in 1939 to Seymour, a journalist and newspaper publisher, and Eleanor, a public relations professional in the highly visible fashion industry, he grew up in a home that bordered Central Park. He attended private schools as a youngster, prep schools in the upper grades, and after a stint at Brown University found the progressive New School of Social Research in the West Village more to his liking. And it was through his immersion in the "steam heated" downtown art scene that he received an education unavailable through academic curriculum. As is characteristic of autodidacticism, Berkson made himself an expert.

Following the autobiographical introduction, the sideboard of collected remembrances serves up *Personal Portraits, Scenes and Routines, One Hundred Women*, including journal entries from his early 20's in New York, and selected interviews.

The anecdotal portrayals recapture an awestruck deer-in-the-headlights neophyte in the world of the famous, near famous, and notorious. "Always meet your heroes" was ostensibly Robert Creeley's advice, and so he did. The list includes a veritable who's who in the contemporary world of art and literature: Abstract Expressionists (the de Koonings, Goldberg, Rivers, Mitchell, Freilicher), New York poets and painters (O'Hara, Ashbery, Denby, Berrigan, Koch, Schuyler, Brainard, Schneeman, Guston), The Beats/Black Mountain (Burroughs, Wieners, Baraka, Olson, Ginsberg). As well, there is Auden and John Cage, Morton Feldman, Arnold Weinstein. Philip Whalen, a poet who remains somewhat of an enigma to Berkson as he does to so many others. And for those still interested in postwar mid-century American poetry, further anecdotal evidence of Frank O'Hara's irreverent, flippant genius is always welcome.

One particularly poignant section dated 1999 details a visit with artists Rudy Burckhardt and Yvonne Jacquette in midsummer Maine while staying nearby

with Alex and Ada Katz. It was a visit Berkson confesses he'd wanted to make for thirty years. After a congenial day of chat and a robust dinner and wine, Berkson and his wife, Connie, drove back to their lodgings. The following day, returning from a hike, they were informed that "Rudy walked into the pond late last night, before dawn." Yvonne is "shocked but not surprised" but perhaps not more so than the reader by this tragic spike in the narrative coming on the heels of varied and rather unsurprising anecdotal portraits.

Yet the sketches are not without Berkson's incisive insight into the world of art. In his 2010 essay "Everyday Expressionism—Michael Goldberg and Painting in the Fifties" (revised 2016), Berkson's keen assessment succinctly and precisely identifies the dilemma of painters and contemporary poets as well.

"The desperation tactics of first generation painters—Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and others—had been taken up by the next generation with more irony than angst, as well as more assurance, if only because assurance was everywhere in the air, those being peak years of Empire. Younger painters talked the talk of existential doubt where in fact absence of faith and the ego-requisite determination to go with what one had—the intuition that a painting was there to be made and that one had the aptitude, particular as to both character and technique, to act accordingly—were givens." Substitute "poet" for "painter" and the proposition is just as relevant, if not more so.

The section titled *Scenes and Routines* collects a grab bag of impressions, remembrances, and reflections from the frivolous to the personally revealing. Reminiscent of Jules Renard's Journals in the cataloguing of social lights and sightings, *Scenes and Routines* could be subtitled "Names Keep Dropping From My Head." Greta Garbo, Roddy McDowell, Judy Garland, Lauren Bacall, Montgomery Clift, Myrna Loy, are presented like the receiving line of New World royalty. Berkson recounts being in Spoleto with Pound, John Wieners, and Charles Olson in 1965. Meeting the eerie and spectral Jean Genet at Yale and along the banks of the Seine. Hanging with Judy Garland at Warhol's Factory. And being introduced to Frank Sinatra who left him underwhelmed. Berkson, the boyhood autograph hunter, still relishes the bright shiny radiance of celebrity, putting himself in propinquity to the leading lights.

As such, and in no half measure, Berkson's associations are varied and legend, from house guest Liza Minnelli and the high fashion crowd to the scuffling poets and painters of the lower Eastside, all well documented with photographs of those times. Here are Bill and his mother, Bill as a young urban sophisticate (and date), Bill of the penetrating gaze as eye candy, Bill with Kenneth Koch and Patsy Southgate, Bill with Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch, Bill with Frank, Bill with Frank, Bill and the nascent school of



New York poets at an Easter Sunday softball outing at the park (later to be the cover of *Best & Co.*, the first collection of the work by these poets), Bill with Willem de Kooning, Bill with Frank, Bill with Pound in Spoleto, Bill with John Wieners and John Ashbery, Bill with Philip Whalen, with Ted Berrigan, with Allan Ginsberg and the Naropa University gang, with Jim Carroll, with Joanne Kyger and Larry Fagin, with Lewis Warsh, Joe Brainard, and Kenward Elmslie, with Ron Padgett, with Bernadette Meyers, with Alex Katz, with his mother photo bombing Frank Sinatra and Mia Farrow at the Black & White Ball, Bill at Woodstock, and more pictures of Bill enhancing any background with Zelig-like ubiquity.

The fragmentation of this some-assembly-required, multiple-choice memoir lends itself to random accessing or browsing the table of contents, name surfing to gauge the breadth of Berkson's social register in the world of art. In this he is his mother's son, as he too has an impressive rolodex of connections. But as close as he comes to revealing the full scope of his autobiography, there's a feeling of omission, editorial or personal, of wholeness hinted at but never fully detailed. Typical of a self-assured humility, Berkson buries his accomplishments under the persona of an affable raconteur in which everything from the monumental and historic to the most mundane has the same weight, viewed from an esthetic distance. As an example, the suicide of Rudy Burkhardt after his visit, shockingly matter of fact in the narrative of his socializing, is dealt with the same dispassion as the whimsical raw footage of his admission to having had sex as a young man with an older woman, a film and TV actress, titillating in referring to her by initials only, but easily discovered by further reading in the memoir.

Yet to portray Berkson merely as a social butterfly would be hugely inaccurate. Although there will always be something of Fifth Avenue privilege in his attitude, there is also an equanimity to recounting the incidentals that make a life in the thrall of the modernist ethos as its explainer and critic, gate keeper, game keeper, referee, warden, arbiter, curator, docent, teacher, and chronicler.

The convergence of art and literature is perhaps a symptom of modernism.

Early in the century the poets of Cubism were allied with those painters, followed by Surrealism and its poets and painters. In Francis Steegmuller's *Apollinaire, Poet Among The Painters* (1963) he identifies Apollinaire as the modern poet who bridged cross disciplinary affiliations of art and literature. Unfortunately, he observes, most English majors have not a clue about art yet it is from their ranks that the literary ambitious arise. The independence of the artist is attractive. The poets choose galleries and bars over bookstores and coffee houses. Rather than write book reviews, they write reviews of gallery shows. The poets hang out at painters' bars and talk about poetry although the painters never go to the coffeehouses to talk about painting. The obsessive intellectual scrutiny of writers, poets in particular, is deemphasized among the immediacy of the visual arts *coup d'œil* and focus placed on the purely perceptual. As with what became the New York School, poets formed similar alliances, and while O'Hara could easily be considered the Apollinaire of late century American poetry, Berkson, as well, could be the philosophical Bergson as his name has often been mispronounced or misunderstood.

Berkson's unobtrusive leadership in a world of esthetics unaffiliated with academics provided an outline for cross discipline literature and art. He identified the precursors and established a network, a loose fit of poets, uptown and down, whose esthetic was a worldly pop modernism, what Brand Gooch, in his O'Hara biography, identified as "Bill's School of New York." And like most blips on the esthetic radar it was way ahead of the curve but passé by the time it became popular. As Apollinaire was to Cubism, and Breton to Surrealism, Berkson, evoking Motherwell's declaration to the painters, was to the school of New York poets. Berkson endowed with context a group of loosely affiliated poets who had migrated to his turf. His social position and that of being a native son gave him a unique sense of ownership, certainly conferring on that particular swim a more cosmopolitan air. It was a case of prep school meets reform school. Or maybe the pure products of America meet the high hysteria of the uppercrust. Berkson admits he never completely assimilated the fashion of the downtown tee shirt poets, later known as 2nd Gen New York poets. His shirts were always collared or turtleneck. The association of poets with the visual arts and artists, and the School of New York painters in particular, that convergence is due in large part to Berkson. And, regardless of having the nomination of this economic and cultural singularity, that post-Beat affiliation is not strictly geographic but finds itself in many regions and locales across the map of the American Literary landscape.

Of that movement, admittedly the most important and defining text is John Ashbery's "Europe", from his book of poems, *The Tennis Court Oath*. In a piece of unequivocal ephemera, Berkson includes excerpts from his engagement

calendar for the year 1961. And it contains a gem of hearsay. He is in Paris, with Frank, and they are having lunch with Joan Mitchell:

October 31: Hallowe'en. Joan Mitchell lunch/ Roy Leaf & JA [John Ashbery] at Deux Magots

Note/ October 31: During lunch at Joan's, Frank pronounces Ashbery "the foremost poet in English today." Joan Mitchell says "God! How I worked over that poem!" (meaning Europe). I grunt. Jean-Paul fixes the camera.

Even though he chose California as the place to take his Archimedean stand, Berkson would always be a New Yorker in exile with the curious expat removal from the place, belonging yet not belonging, or so his writing would indicate. In an impressionistic piece titled "Changes" he admits "The shock shortly after my sixtieth birthday, of realizing that I had slipped over the line and had spent more than half my life in California, all the while maintaining my New York credentials." Ten years later he is at Diane di Prima's induction as San Francisco's poet laureate. She looks like a perky Queen Victoria, but for her Brooklyn accent. He remarked to her at the reception following, "The longer we stay out here, the more 'New York' we sound." Berkson found on the West Coast a creative milieu as civilized but perhaps not as set in its ways as the East Coast. Although in his element in the high octane art scene, it was ultimately the soft convergences of Pacific Rim atmospheric cycles that held him.

In his day, Berkson catalyzed a group of young poets defined by a time and place, marshalling a second generation to spotlight the accomplishments of the first generation. Some of the great later poems by Frank O'Hara found their inspiration in Berkson's bourgeois insouciance. What he memorializes in *Since When* is a time past, a window on a homogeneous art world of poets and painters. Yet all that is history now that the English majors have retaken the ramparts, and they are famously ambivalent, even hostile, to the visual arts.

Berkson's anecdotal highlights map out a life as impressive as the times which he chronicled and includes wives, children, travel, altered states, sexual encounters, marginal gossip, and even, in his sixties, a lung transplant. He grew up in a fashionable world with a sense of decorum that never left him, reserved and sophisticated. Through it all he passed with a certain sober equanimity, clear eyed to his sense of place in the world, especially that of art and literature. Bill was proud that he could be equally comfortable with the natives as well as the society swells remarking that he was the only one he knew of his generation that had been at Woodstock as well as Truman Capote's Black and White Ball. He attained personal equilibrium in July of 2016.

Further Reading:

Portrait And Dream, New and Selected Poems, Bill Berkson, Coffee House Press, 2009

Expect Delays (poems), Bill Berkson, Coffee House Press, 2014

The Sweet Singer of Modernism & Other Art Writings 1985-2003, Bill Berkson, Quabooks, 2003

New York Painters & Poets; Neon In Daylight, Jenni Quilter, Bill Berkson, Advisory Editor (with Larry Fagin), Rizzoli, 2014

(This review first appeared in Parole, the blog of the New Black Bart Poetry Society.)

TANGLED HIERARCHIES

I have a jazz library I can play
through my auditory cortex
sample at will the great riffs
some more obsessively than others

step out of my rustication
I am reminded that there are more
than nine circles of poetry hell

under the bodhi tree
plagued by the demons of doubt
and misgivings
they're known as trolls now
preying on a digital presence
truth given to the grip of illusion

my social skills are so inadequate
I'm as painful as a kidney stone
forbidding as a twenty foot drop
I end up shaking my own hand
as Archimedes said give me a place
to stand and I'll always be at the center

granularity and grit at the molecular level

reject the simplicity of assumption
although assumption is its own downfall

and there's denial's deep pit of despair
the polarity of believing and not believing
tuned to a synchronous harmony

off beat off key cacophonous unpredictable
the center may not hold but the bottom keeps it steady
a flow that is neither time or consciousness
and applause merely an afterthought

how to explain the passage of weeks
as if I just stepped out of the room

preoccupied by another language
itself another room dark stuffed with memories
the dapple of days through the rustle of leaves
isomorphic flickers across a blank page
fleeting contours of shape shifting thoughts
the world says a lot about itself in many
different ways of order or chaos turmoil and calm
the sense of time relies on a diurnal cycle
what has passed will remain in its own inimitable
way appreciated by a resignation that days
fly by without ever noting the difference

in the slide toward personal entropy
little hints of disorganization
I comprehend on my own terms
the choice is by denial or emotion
troublesome and sad is a skewed duality
the imperative of one moment to the next
that they should intuitively flow

eschewed materialism yet owned
by possessions the unimaginable
plays hide and seek with itself every
shimmer of light affects consciousness

THE METAPHYSICAL DYNAMIC

Existence abhors doubt and
consciousness must constantly address
the possibility of its illusory nature
by underpinning physical reality with
the complexity of additional dimensions

consider how unexceptionally common
existence is putting on more bark
as I age though the amount of pith
remains the same the breathing exterior
exposed to the elements cracks and
sheds the inspiring interior reborn
to itself as cyclical cynical flow

"Once you give a charlatan power over you

you almost never get it back."

thus spoke Carl Sagan although this
seems like a timely quote it is also
a lesson of history one of the saddest
it is not a first time nor will it be the last
questioning authority is a survival skill
although not a guarantee against
oppression Bruno the Nolan a prime
example just as there are more ways
to skin a cat there are also more ways
to be burned at the figurative stake
stealth is a quality of intelligence

doing the dishes I am of two minds
the body mind that scrubs and manipulates
the crockery and utensils and the other
mind largely located in the prefrontal
cortex that wanders about completely
free of the constraints of time crisscrossing
the bridge between hemispheres following
no particular path but to where the next
impulse leads as the shifting shape of
a gray cloud streaked by blue sparks

pleasure is not for someone who is exclusive
there must be two one who desires
and one who wants to be desired
the emptiness of desire is filled by
the desirable once desire is quenched
the desirable must transmute into
a different object of desire ad infinitum
so that sooner or later comes the inevitable
realization that desire originates regret
that most lamentable human condition

born before existence the mind
continually tempted to consider
itself nonexistent the universe
as consciousness that everything
in the universe is conscious and
consciousness at its unique scale

memory as the enduring presence

of the insuppressible continuum
of what's left over of the lived

detachment is making use of the world
as if not using it from the beginning
my relationship with the world has been
one of an effort to find identity
with things (the exterior) and identify
things I am among (the interior)

let me start with the origin of
the word "man" from the Sanskrit
"manu" which means "to think"
which leads me to consider
the relationship between man and gods
as an endless exchange of guilt

I have to write my environment
and it can't only include my intellect
I must borrow from without to
uphold the subjective self
design a landscape using real
trees flat planes of painted scenery
consciousness provides a backdrop
upon which my shadow plays as
consciousness the shadow self
(*pace* Plato) life enters language
through concrete utterances and
vice versa because where
there is style there is genre

the first speaker is the one who
disturbed the eternal silence
of the universe since then
everything's echo built upon echo

any utterance is a link in a chain
a very complicated organized chain
of other utterances that go all the way
back to the ur-utterance "I am"
as meaning to answer the question
whatever that question might be

THE POET THUMBS A RIDE
An Excerpt from the novel *Ode To Sunset*

His armpits had begun to pool, a trickle down the ribcage. He slung the silver suitcoat over one shoulder, and nonchalantly showed his thumb to the passing traffic. Maybe it was the arresting synthetic green of his polo shirt. A dusty blue older model four-door tentatively found the shoulder of the road a little ways past him and pulled to a stop. He had been right in the middle of a train of consideration that, as a poet, his expectations should be no less: that people give him money, and women throw their pussies at him. Or that strangers stop and offer him a ride.

Opening the passenger side door he peered at the driver, cartons and boxes piled in the back seat indicating that he was a salesman of some sort, and said "Thanks for stopping."

"I'm going as far as Booneville. Where you headed?" He was a round headed man with a little nub of chin, in his thirties, maybe, a smudge of mustache over a set of full lips, hair neatly parted on the right, possibly Hispanic though light-skinned.

"I'm trying to get to Elk." He waited for the man to remove a sales binder and papers from the seat.

"Well, I'll get you part of the way at least."

Once he was belted, the car shot out onto the highway. The driver side-glanced, "Car breakdown?"

"Uh, no, I caught the bus as far as Cloverdale."

"Oh yeah, a lot of people do that. Usually kids. Though I did pick up an old lady once. She must have been in her seventies. An old back-to-the-earth type, hippie. There are a lot of them hiding out in the woods in these parts. Pretty harmless, most of them. Unless they're growing dope and then you never know, probably packing. I've picked up guys reeking of weed, stink like a skunk or something." The driver shook his head and took a bite of the ice cream bar he was holding. There was a box of them in the center console, and as evidenced by the empty wrappers, he'd gone through about half the box.

"Some of them will even give you blow jobs. The hippie chicks, I mean." And a further qualification: "So I've heard." The driver licked his fingers of the ice cream's sticky residue, his glance expecting a reaction.

Wouldn't you know it, there's always somebody who wants to sniff out your sexuality. He had been there before. Hang out in bars long enough and it was bound to happen. And Frisco? As Johnny Mathias used to sing, "*Chances are. . .*" When he was younger, hardly a day went by when he wasn't hit on by men, and women, regularly. But never in a car, and by the driver. The predictability of the next few moments was a familiar *déjà vu*.

"Do you like men?"

"Not intimately, no. Do I look like someone who does?"

"I'm only asking because not many people in these parts dress the way you are. Or carry a purse."

"It's not a purse, it's a bag. I use it to carry my stuff. I don't have a car that I can just toss my things in the backseat or in the trunk."

"Got a gun in there?"

"No, but I've got a book of poems. That's just about as deadly."

"Poems?!" The driver spit as if he'd spoken a dirty word. "You read poems?!"

"Yeah, I'm a poet, you pretty much have to. I mean, some poets don't read poetry and still they write it, but it shows."

"Is that so? A poet. Are you sure you don't like men? That's what I heard about poets."

"No, there are actually some poets who prefer the split tail."

"What's your name?"

"Carl Wendt."

"Never heard of you."

"Oh, do you know a lot of poets?"

The driver frowned calling a mental effort to the fore. "Nope." Then with a quick sideways glance, "What kind of money do you make doing that? If you don't mind my asking."

"From writing poetry? Zilch. It's being a poet that makes you the money, but you have to have a good hustle. You have to make your living off your rep."

"Oh yeah? How do you do that?"

"Any number of ways. One is by being outspoken or doing something outrageous so that people will remember your name. There are grants, and awards, and residencies, lecturing to college classes and writer's retreats, teaching writing workshops, speaking at Rotary luncheons. And poetry prizes. I was awarded the 2009 Pillsbury Prize just this last January."

"For baking?"

"No, for my contribution to American literature." He thought to add "such as it is" but it was a personal cynicism he needn't inflict on anyone.

"No shit? They have a prize for that?"

"Yeah, it's pretty common. There are all kinds of prizes for that kind of thing. Some poets, that's all they do is go after prizes. It keeps them so busy they hardly have time to write poetry."

"Can't be much competition, I mean, who writes poetry anymore?"

"You can't imagine what the competition is like, even in your most extravagant moment. It's a blood bath. Poets turn into back stabbing creeps just to get their name in print."

"Seriously? I always pictured poets as a bunch of guys with limp wrists bitch slapping each other."

"Like cats, they've got claws. Two things you need to be a successful

poet, a knife to stab people in the back, and knee pads for the amount of time you'll spend kneeling in front of someone's crotch. And bad poetry? You'll never step into that endless shit stream twice."

"Eeeuw! Why'd anyone want to be a poet then?"

"For the perks."

"Perks? They better be good."

"Sex. Unlimited opportunity for getting laid."

"Really?!"

"Oh yeah, I know guys who claim to be poets just for that reason.

They write a handful of poems that makes them sound like they're the sensitive type. Women in particular fall for that shit. It has nothing to do with poetry and everything to do with the ulterior motive."

"So, ah, you must have got your fair share," the driver said peeling back the wrapper of another ice cream bar. "I mean, just sayin', you know?"

Once, years ago when he lived in New York City he'd attended an open reading at St. Mark's Church. It had been a free-for-all. One guy even got up and read his wallet, driver's license, social security, business and membership cards, the like. And he got laughs. Another poet, this one with obvious name recognition, got up and read a poem titled *Poets I'd Like To Fuck* which included the names of well known contemporary poets, both male and female, as well as a few mighty ancestors. It was a very funny shtick and he had the poetry audience, mostly friends and cohorts, some of them poets named in the list, in stitches.

He had borrowed the concept and improved on it a bit. He would declaim the alphabet and pick a woman's name that started with the particular letter in sequence and improvise their sexual experience based on what the name suggested. And there was always some woman after the reading who would express interest in joining the list. Although the last time he'd used that routine, titled *Twenty Six Women I Have Slept With*, was a number of years ago, and the reception had been coolly correct. It had done nothing to dispel the rumor that he was a male chauvinist pig.

"Yeah, can't complain." The driver wanted details but that wasn't going to happen. Still Franny came to mind, a nurse he'd met when he brought a friend who'd been stabbed outside a bar on Second Avenue into the ER at Bellevue Hospital. That should have brought up a pleasant memory of Franny as a frisky compact woman with straw blond hair, but instead it called up the time he'd been sitting in a coffee house in the East Village and a homeless guy tried to strangle him with a ratty gray scarf. He remembered the scarf and the color specifically. Fortunately his table mates had pulled the guy off, and then the police came. Also distinctly, the memory of the one patrolman asking him where he was from, and when he answered Indiana, the cop had suggested "Why don't you go back there."

"Oh, yeah?" The driver cast a wary eyed side glance, half finished ice

cream bar in hand.

“Yeah, I probably have an entire alphabet of women I’ve slept with, and while it may have been fun at the time, looking back I think I missed some real opportunities for a meaningful relationship.” Val’s name swam up. He hadn’t meant to conjure her name, more proof of her haunting even a year later. She had occupied his physical space and his emotional state far too long and painfully to let go. She would always inhabit a part of his being as an aftertaste of guilt-racked regret. He didn’t want to think about Wendy, either. She had saved his life, but in the worst way possible.

“Here’s a bit of free advice, a pity fuck always turns to shit.”

The driver discarded the empty wrapper on the console and nodded as if he’d received the transmission of sage advice.

He laughed at himself yet the set of his mouth also indicated that he had said as much as he was going to say on the subject, now that the x had been taken out of sex, and he turned his attention to the passing landscape.

The dusty blue car followed the climbing road in a series of switchbacks, the forested land on either side creating a canopy through which the mounting sun cast its dapples, flickers of hypnotizing light accompanied by the swaying motion of the vehicle’s swing through the curves, all conducive to the dance of reverie.

Richard Kostelanetz

from *Kosti's Tondos*

TO BEND OF BAY, RIVERBUN, PAST EYE AND ADAM'S, FROM SWERVE OF SHORE

the imprisonment of language within circular syntax realizes the imprisonment of language within circular syntax

Chinese character within every circle of western words is an invisible

only in your recognition of the presence of this sentence exists

with doors that open to rooms that have windows that open to all roads leading to houses

feet is hard everywhere I walk in the city the ground beneath my

available only as texts without a beginning or an end are reading experiences

only within a hologram creates a world of incorporeal activity that exists

X X X V

Point-blank I shot my shadow for following too
closely behind me.

The manuscript of my autobiography is a stack of
blank pages.

X X X V I

X L V I I I

Two implicit themes of this collection are that
credible advice can be perverse and perverse advice
credible.

Never leave parties until after they're over.

X I I X

L X X I I I

Train for life's competitions by running each day
until you drop.

imbalanced in a person's mind.

He claimed to have the most gigantic mind ever.

I X X I I

L X X X I I I

Obsessed as I am with every monumental event in my own experience, it's lamentable that I won't be

able to write about my death.

years after his death.

copyright protection, which now extends to fifty

Many every American writer live as long as his

V I X X X I V

Daniel f. Bradley

How to Efficiently Dull the Edges off Poetry

(a bunch of pages)

That's me.
no movies for months after.
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, inseparable together.
in your palm, the ripe weight.
And the woman calling.
vision.
I wish I was here in Nebraska
straight up, blood red, into the light again.

in mine.
Over the eyes.
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain.
A white and shapeless mass.
out
Safe from the wolf's black jaw and the dull ass's hoof.

it's procrastination. It hurts my heavy body to lie down.
The shadow that everything casts.
And makes me furiously glad and fills me up with serious pleasure.
I kissed my father.
Hearing the King's translation.
for you, you hungry thing.
Put the kettle on for tea and whisper it to me.
which, cutting across the empty air, direct themselves at something noiseless
over there.

a woolgather dark.
before it is too late.
flowers of volcanic thought
for us, to us, tonight.
I crawled into an open pore and entered your bloodstream.
the soil that wants for nothing and yields and yields.

the day.
the waves which have kept me from reaching you.
the rain soak through my shirt and was unharmed.

and which night's recitation is secretly mere wind—
And in your fragrant bosom dies.
and one of them, the taller one minus the straw hat, is me.
to cut our losses.
this man with my own face.

crowding out everything else.
handed him the plate.
of the forming crystal.
The heart is sensual, though five eyes break.
maybe even race.
I've lost her, I thought, and called for the bill.

As what he loves may never like too much.
so suited—would my enemy do otherwise?
And found assurance in the perfect star.
and that's all there is to it.
the day of quatorz'juillet
undone.
don't tell me deluge. don't tell me heat, too damned much heat
Not like an edge of land coming over the sea!

to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing
a world without a heartbeat but it stays
the palace, the sky, everything.
to hold another patron's drink.
It is a flower. On this mountainside it is dying.
we no longer control could drag us back.

To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.
rouged by the fluvial light of six o'clock.
his hands barely touching a breast.
and find that it can stop and go no deeper.
or I will leave you.
The sort of shit that it demanded.
and laugh and dry your damp flesh if you came.
one of them wonders what time I am coming home.

are dripping milk into their open mouths.
even hailstones in the strawberry fields.
its voice touches and parts the air of summer.
And Life steps almost straight.
Of God: and some young, piteous, murdered face.

Has come and scattered all my path with flowers.

First touch of hand in hand – Did one but know!
And with God be the rest!
A fair mouth's broken tooth.
hardened in a leaf?
I want to learn the faith of the indifferent.
In Flanders fields.
Fallen cold and dead.
like a bishop's, surging to its point.

No lover I courted my sleep.
And myself.
But is for others undiminished somewhere.
are brown, after all.
at the world's end the graves are green.
Still painting waves on the walls of the Palazzo Ducale.

crash. What reaches him except disaster?
they don't think they have.
through which the current chortles an intimate tune.
a god. And I pray you into life. Into flesh.
An offered covenant—love that gives them each a name.
and laugh and dry your damp flesh if you came.
weaving me, a mixed-blood grandson, into them.
Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

Despairing cried, "There is no God."
when you could be grieving for heaven?
to open the openness over all.
each rib shuttling drops of liquid light.
sun moon stars rain
all the places they might shine.

it will never get here
we tell him. And Josey tips him. She tips him well.
reconciliation & pardon. They don't last.
speaking and listening; that was the contradiction.
For the weary poet withering on the husk.
but, down on down, the uninhabitable sorrow.
and returns.
his living name.

Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.
had willed it.
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.
The stay of your secure firm dry embrace.
the smiles of those who once were blessed.
less, unadorned.

Somebody loves us all.
Are covered in snow.
perfect in the dew
and for everything.
so close that your eyes close with my dreams.
and dart from world to world.
For she knows that God is her savior.
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

Move my eyes from one sight to the next.
If they should lose or last the night.
always a coyote.
as an empty hive, and she is breathing.
maybe eighty-seven.
To have waited at least a moment to see what was already there.

Will bury their own, don't worry.
Zarfs to both your names in the Great Book of Life.
bagging gold for the cold days to come.
A book of portents terrible to read.
of his hands and fingers, we know nothing.
of the living.
woven to something else.
a perfect birthday moon.

Stop, don't poke your finger up my tail!
the only thing that would grieve with me.
And all their language babble and disgust.
is higher than the sky
I just can't catch.
for this particular silence.

if the bird overwhelms the old playground.
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.
must now keep looking in.
But each leaf is fringed with silver.

and the wind keeps carrying my words away
I was mute wood. Now I am dead I sing.
about circles, the concept of, and Leonardo da Vinci.
for joy ...

Or whistling, I am not a little boy.
have noticed me.
They can shake their boobies but they can't shake you.
heading west, just like the sun, hidden in smoke.
Slipping — is Crashe's law —
was that sticky infusion, that rank flavor of blood, that poetry, by which I
lived?
give you treats.
That was me.
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!
17. a mother's joy & clutched breath
forgets.
for these vines.
your turn you are next
vast reach of all that is not, and still something is.

I have been her kind.
girl in the iron bird? is the clue to the girl in the locket?
"They shall overcome."
How lost I would feel, and how dangerous.
'Twixt women's love, and men's, will ever be.
between his world and mine.

other, apart from.
they are not
How could you ever be for me what I myself am?
Into Trend's shadow because our money always followed.
to it, it is my hope.
Faded like my lost Youth, that no bright Spring renews.
All that's ahead and behind.
of everything that is and isn't.

theirs. Is it not marvelous to be forgetful?
Thousands have died in a nod.
nothing much to buy.
The bridegroom wished he knew.
Tío Berto was the last to leave.
On the darkening Green.

how faithful are your branches.
that, by all rights, should have been mine.
When the ship he is on slips into darkness, there at the end.
comfortless, so let evening come.
until you forgot everything you once knew.
Men who march away.
it makes for you to wear
You must be somewhere, right?

The winter cannot touch and no touch tarnish.
I fast and pray and ride.
To Disgrace of Price –
then pushed her over the edge into the river.
Hail & farewell!
into snow.

John M. Bennett

dime pulgas

ddime pulgas frog pants sweat drunk knot
door dark soup dog shirt time
lost left a fork

what plate I cost clambered thru a frost wall an
anger wheel inhabit surely not was surely was
compactant squealing gget gagged on tine -
slow mulch eat - *the reamer cries*

HALF A LEG BEREFT

nor life together "the Grin Sleeper"

"...a rare cancer of the white blood cells
called POEMS..." - *The New York Times 2.3.19*

*the dream of a chair is the dream of your head in a
cardboard box; in the box with your head a sh
redded book fermented calabaza seeds*
- *Gracias a Bibiana Padilla Maltos*



ABRID LE CHEMIN OUVREZ EL CAMINO

el caminochemin es lo abierto es

ABRID ABRID ABRID

Abrid chemin - Jean-Marc Baillicu

rut whistle

fish's friction concrete inches from the
drilled left ear the "mall over the hill" where
vowels die books undress your spoons
your asterisk disappears in unfinished clouds
- *After Iván Argüelles' "twilight cantos 37"*

I what that what is cloning rage your the
thigh rain sweat his a hole
chair blood where dreamed
demaerd erehw
ddRown



dolorante

el dolor sciático es dadadolorífico

...corpselike in the presce...hack
ed *ton* nueht *guès*...the *lä* the...
ve la sed...b led g ames,,,ehn
tempestic *ant* ,Nous ou asphyxie

Asphyxie A S P H Y X I E

- Hacked from Olchar E. Lindsann's "Degeneration Charm"

sheets and shoes a nostril name and
fork your hammer table sl eeve a
d rift where hunching inna meat chair la
chaîr sans vent sans ventre ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

bleed inside your shirt

ANT SUFF OCATION

hormigagas doorknob in mouth
edge of throat dog mist path
guts & shirts oil soaked bed

flock of crackers stub yr wit
less redemembering's limp crunch
against yr skull a salted inna wh
iffed watch beneath my hheel heelloff
under utter
shirt thirst
mutter udder
shirt thirst
under utter

wh^eel against th^e window

not sun but teeth
blade saw

nos

it

RL

DOLORR DE LA NADA

NADADOLORIFICANTE

NADARDOLORENSE

(si soy)

en el~nos~ una transvela de bruma(

la huevada

MOT Lungch: the dream of a grey metal ch
 air is the dream of a faucet rusting in the kitch
 en is the thickening fog inside your walls *uh d*
ream of laundry swirling in a tree (() (() () ((
- for C. Mehrl Bennett

SUSPENSATIVO ES

tus.....me olvidaron ,,huevos inrevueltos
insentados soy ni seæ whet the window
loess cliffs roll across the puna / / / / / / /

part your sleep hot gun your risen slope your
 enter plunger flossed wind behind yr
 eyelid mot hed head sees desiezed
 inyolked detabled leapt
 before the train

H U E V O N O

nestled thumb grease.....cloh koob deirub
 corner mind mrots gel
 throat lech
 taorht heel
 dnim renroc leg storm
 esaerg bmuht deltsen.....buried book hole

neck broke\stars climb un wall labile numb
 entrance to the tomb boca insular insulto
 crispado por las migas increpadas

ES LO QUE QUEDA

neutrino s s s s s s s s s s
 de mi alma matrona matona

el sueño de un libro de sueños es el
sueño del zapato izquierdo que camina
por el zapato derecho hacia el túnel

○ *pensativo de la rabia*

)se abre la rabia se cierra la rabia en mis ○○
huehuevos del intestino boquiabierto(

ultranadaismo

"Si un espejo se acercara a mi cerebro
vería a su propio espejo sin cerebro"

- Mario Santiago Papasquiaro

*I was flailing in the pizza box I was
failing through a shirt I was nailing*

my cheek to a dictionary I was **S**

ent the frog a way was
instantced I a fin g er raised
before the sun "Saliva insensata" - M.S.P.

...puntos subpensativos... - gracias, Juan Ángel

was shortly in the sandy chicken leg

LISTEN WITH YR MOUTH

"nor neck slag"

is senseless floater rice-and-maggots sits upright
in a rowboat where yr eating faucet
gleams beneath a desk yr dust
falls off)flag dog dreams(

ay sleebper phone escupir el
anillo de lo ya visto *el pocta-ungüento*
que abre la peluca para hablar
del último peldaño

ultimaista
ultrabajista
ultranudista
ultrajeista
ultruenista
ultruquista
ultratumbista

ultrafrozen remainder system or yr
fartricide un chiste chido y mojado

dun g f o g inside the lungch
the "oointment ppoet"
"I am being bitten!" - *Popol Vuh* - "Mi xiti'owik!"
my hand in front of my face where is it?



Adam Fieled

Ode on Waves

Raw December chill: I stood, smoking, outside
Starbucks, staring through the pane façade
at a brunette teenager, fine-featured, who looked like
me, bent over a history book; moody, pawed
at by circumstances past her control. I thought of
State College, my sublets, also a buried past,
attempts at being a consummate artist, & at love.

The tapestry around my brain being woven
showed a vignette, disappearing into exiled years,
someone of my kith & kin, damned not to last—

acclaimed as useless. When I'd walk Conshy streets,
I was always, without knowing it, looking for her.
If it was Manayunk, I'd put on the old shirts, sleeves
still unstained by years of heavy use, eyes stirred
by possibility. Or Center City, shady ghost-like incisions
of the old Aughts scenester crew, now vacant,
derelict, all guesses at identity lost, open to revision—
in another paned façade, summer's day, reflections
of poison in the air, the iced coffee (even), the toilets,
waves against all we'd held together here breaking—

&, as one who ages must know, why waves have to break.
Natural human progression: everything covered up.
Natural human predilection: to bolster everything fake;
& yet if you can fight the masses, the rackets, with guts,
you are inscribing the light of heaven into willing granite,
from the haunted, furrowed brows of the doomed
who deserved better, to the idle buzzers whose vanity
filled the galleries, clubs, coffee shops, with human
energy, a sense of hipness, rightness, in earlier times,
so that your life still holds the unity of one heart, one room.

There's what you can make right, what you can't, lots of
grey area around, sort of, maybe, "I'll find out later,"
attempts at what you think, inebriated, enflamed, is love,
what gets produced beyond your control, faked or fated.
So I stood there, saw her through that pane, Whitmarsh
Shopping Center moving heedlessly, cheaply, around us,

& she was more real than a Grecian Urn, or Shelley's skylark,
I could've run away, she might've, torn the frozen panic
of what it meant, but didn't: & this, later, is what I can give her, lines,
whatever else doesn't matter, this is the wave for the two of us.

Jim Leftwich & Steve Dalachinsky

the fractured god glob

synchro-heart dragger
another birthing
 the the glob/hen fired rain
 then downsized the so-what
like daggers in the chromatic art of
writhing among mothers who have
 & have not seen fire &
rain / brains sizzling at thin dawn
 the drizzle drown effect
as postmen wood-letter the beat
 off [GOOP]
reflective sneeze-riddle with
 frog-plop / no mail today / would
 a postmodern poem really be
This fractured & lyrical (the
 politics of form returning to
its hybrid origins) broke chain tow truck
drive-thru burg(h)ers & hackers
 slackers & road/hogs
 slipknot why not wastrels
 pirates of VENUS & penises from MARS
that boring old death-sucker the god of war
 & those that believe in god(s)
 & those that think they are GODs.

the fart markette fumbles
(an on going chronicle of wealth)

trouble in jello in jello beams eulogy
operative riddance knack forklifting
disks leering timely dust like kleenex
squeezing could wind up anywhere

 beheld in household
 a surge of exiting
 the opposite of claustrophobia
 (the title read)
pin/pricked rocked the savage feast
 53% of eligible voters think
 democracy is a bad idea
 your local weatherman has more
credibility than your local congressman
 who fell down the well
 as the rapper bank rolled the
light artist who wanted to sell his dream
 of sustainable lives in dead volcanoes
to the art market for incredible profit
pork lasso up 3 points rent noir down 2
 breed is a self-fueling engine
road dent carver up 10 million bucks thank
 you coin yeah very cool
uch even mentioning these names soil our
 prophet-able woids basket case past infinity
 & all we can bravely say as we continue to
destroy the earth GO WEST YOUNG THUG go further west....

trouble in jello in jello beams eulogy
operative riddance knack forklifting
disks leering timely dust like kleenex
squeezing could wind up anywhere

january 2019

M.J. Iuppa

Mirage

There's a vacancy in the sky where this morning's sun is too bright to see— glint of ice melting— every cell failing to be water's stakeholder, like my body changing in its destructive thoughts of healing.

*

I am no longer who I once was— woman, who bore three children, who marveled at the miracle of her body's resilience to change over time and still be able to pass through years of narrowing and widening without thinking twice. Yet, here I am, struck to stone by my body's betrayal— one cell to speak of in my right fallopian tube created this cancer that would spread in a network of freckles— all connected— building and bumping into shape-shifting shadows on a CT scan. It terrified my doctor to read the report to me.

*

"Sorry to meet you under these circumstances," my oncologist said; then, hand-writ, "to cure" on my chart's prognosis. I agreed to six cycles of infusion, with radical robotic GYN surgery, either at the midpoint, or end, or not at all. I didn't realize what not at all meant. I thought it meant cure without need of surgery; but, in truth, it meant end of the road, or simply, nothing more can be done. Cancer exists in the conditional tense, which depends on the word "if." *If you can suffer the IV drugs, you will participate in your cancer's prolonged act of dying.* You will have mixed feelings about what you're doing; and, once the cancer has been arrested, and you're close to crossing the finish line, you'll wonder how the next six months to five, ten, fifteen years will unfold without this constant vigil. All you can think about is travel— *if you could be anyplace but here.*

*

Reality has a way of making me feel ill at ease. Even though I have met the terms and conditions of ovarian cancer with a double dose of gallows humor, I am shy of accepting good news. Whenever nurses say one and done, I feel a slight catch in my throat. Can I say yes to life's on-going change, one moment to the next, with its swirl of mercurial green shadows? Will I grab hold of the rope of the ship's bell and ring it three times, loud and brash, knowing it will echo in my ears—that instant of immortality— the knot of trust, tightening and loosening, with its sound that speaks in volume, like the vacancy in the sky?

**Thinking of a Cure for Cancer after Looking at Thousands of Eyeless Fish
Wash Up on a New Zealand Beach . . .**

~after Lucia Perillo

Quite by chance, I caught something . . .

I blew up like a blowfish, three times
my size, ingesting huge quantities of

saltwater, just to appear un-wielding—
utterly dreadful— my body became

a trapdoor to the down under, where I
bobbled among thousands of snappers,

racing blind against the tide's whiplash—
crashing upon the stretch of white sand

where they took their last breaths side
by side by side, and I was stuck there

a shriveled star in morning's bright
world— I had one thought & nothing.

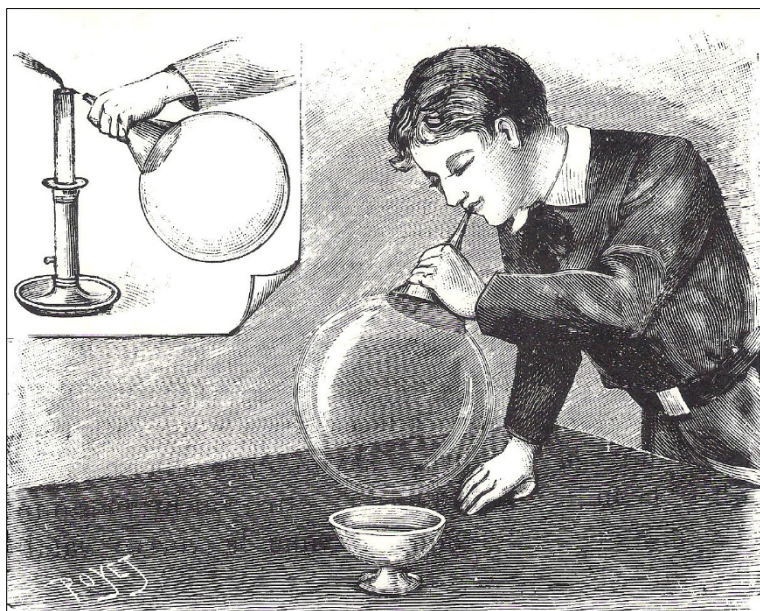
Gregory Stephenson

HOMAGE to



AKBAR DEL PIOMBO

i.m. Norman Rubington (1921-1991)



Beatnik "cooks" quantity of hashish, from which the intoxicating vapours are then inhaled.



Beatnik ingests cannabis, employing "hash pipe."

J. D. Nelson

batman is in the blood tonight

up the stairs at the top of the hill

tonight is the battle of the creatures
& earth is excited

you were the plant on the table
& I watered you

what to do with the world
once we have it

wow for frank getting whaling lessons

brownsville mustery

earth all right
never a sloan

the clean cook to be cloned
I could see the ham of the hammer

speaking of your candied hands
one earth peg my stereo self says

make a cake for cable day
damp index card oh well

n. atural

to earth
to earth
where our candles glow

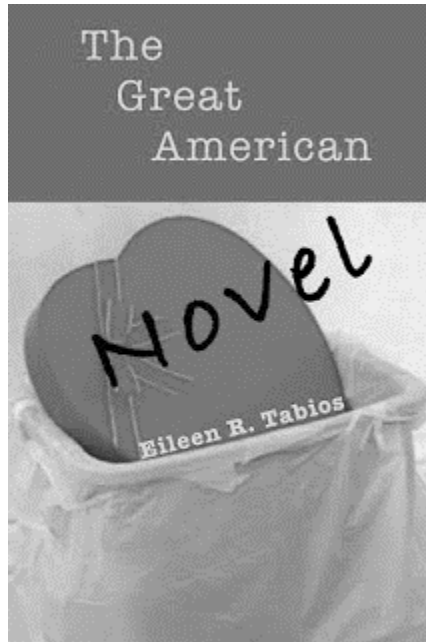
where one becomes many

wet world one
this is a harder level than the last
 you need the magic lantern

earth dreams are the strangest

Neil Leadbeater

Reviews



The Great American Novel

Eileen R. Tabios

(Paloma Press, San Mateo & Morgan Hill, CA, 2019)

<https://palomapress.net/2019/01/18/the-great-american-novel/>

Every so often a book comes along that defines America in such a way that it is hailed by the critics as a literary benchmark that comes to be dubbed “The Great American Novel”. Examples include *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville; *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe; *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and, more recently, *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac. Reading these classics it is easy to see that there is more than one great American novel as each one in its own way captures the spirit of the age in which it is written and creates this consensus of opinion among those who pronounce upon such things about its “greatness”—its staying power. Rather like “the American dream” it is hard to pin down and is more of an aspiration, a Platonic ideal, than anything else.

The cover design of Eileen Tabios' latest book, however, might suggest that the time of the great American novel—if it ever really existed as a defined entity—is now over. The heart of it has gone out of America and it has become an expendable commodity. It raises the question of who has the time nowadays to read novels. In the twenty-first century, the speed with which information is communicated around the globe by technology has left us with little or no time for conventional reading and quiet reflection. Drowning in information, we struggle to keep up with events. Our attention spans have been shortened quite drastically through our habit of flitting from one thing to another. Text messaging sums up so succinctly the nature of our abbreviated lives.

It is possible that even the branding associated with the term "The great American novel" is now defunct. In "Wordless branding" (*Monocle*, March 2019) Peter Firth asks "What's in a name? Not much, it seems; the future is visual." He goes on to cite how the biggest brands now want to be recognized by their symbols alone and quotes Rory Sutherland, vice-chair of the ad firm Ogilvy when he says "there's a huge proportion of the world that doesn't read roman script; we are negotiating the world by icons."

It will come as no surprise then to discover that this latest book from Tabios is largely visual, comprising a selection of her visual poetry composed between 2001 and 2019. These poems take the form of photographs, art installations, mobiles, domestic objects, computer screens. and, at one point, photographs of patterns made by plucked human hair, the latter adding a new word to my vocabulary, "achromotricia", loss of hair color. The accompanying texts—and there is a fair amount of text as well—act as a commentary on the visual art taking the reader on a personal exploration of cultural identity and language. In some cases the texts appear within the images themselves.

In her series, "Excavated Tankas" (2018), Tabios shows us just how much of the past we forget in the present and, by implication, how much there is in the present that we will forget in the future. Memory is selective, it forgets so much of the gray glaze of the past. The series "Erasing Amnesia" (2018) can be viewed as an attempt to recollect and restore that which has been lost but success is limited. It is not just a question of erasing the words "I forgot" from each line of text but of restoring the remainder, much of which still remains blocked out.

There are some things which one never forgets. In Tabios' case, this is the brutality witnessed in her birthland under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. It manifests itself most powerfully in her sequence entitled "Listing Poem Towards The New Filipino Society" (2007) which she composed when she was invited along with over 50 other Filipino poets, artists, writers and poet-artists,

to contribute to an exhibition entitled “Chromatext Reloaded” curated by Sid Gomez Hildawa, Jean Marie Syjuco and Alfred Yuson and held at the Main Gallery of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. The core of her installation (which is mounted in the form of a crucifix) comprises a “list poem” in which each line contains the title of a book by Ferdinand Marcos. The design evokes crucifixion because Tabios and her family and, in the wider context, Filipinos in general, were sacrificed by the Marcos dictatorship. The installation is pinned against a red lush fabric to denote the color of blood. Part of the installation features a poem ripped apart to partly reveal her baby photograph to illustrate how she, among many, were ripped apart by the Marcos regime. She also conceived of the rip as the ripping out of Filipinos into the diaspora. In another work, which could well apply to this one, Tabios states that “Poetry’s task is not to affirm the (unjust) status quo but to disrupt it.”

There are other ways to keep in touch with one’s homeland. In the present age, one of those ways is through the internet. Accessing images is never the same as being there though. As Tabios says, “virtual reality’s images bring you closer to your birthland. But a *remove* remains and persists.” It is this *removethat* Tabios explores in her poetry and visual art installation entitled “Pilipinz Cloudygenous” (2018-2019). “Cloudygenous” is a word of her own making which she uses to reflect the contemporary integration of internet access into daily living, a practice more likely to deepen and expand in the future. It replaces physical reality and engagement with such reality. It has both negative and positive aspects to it in the way a cloud can obscure but also generate life-supporting rain. The more one is tied to the internet, however, the more displaced one becomes. Part of this installation comprises a series of mobiles which symbolize the Filipino diaspora. The mobiles hang from the ceiling and float in space—a metaphor for the internet cloud. A series of wooden carvings from the Philippines manufactured for the tourist trade hang from the mobiles by unstable connections to manifest the instability and shifting nature of the Filipino diaspora.

In the sequence, titled “The Mortality Asemics,” strands of plucked white hair form intricate, lace-like patterns against the dark background of a speaker box. They can be viewed from several vantage points: as matter that is weightless and floating in space; as an addition to the surface on which they have landed or as a subtraction from it, a hairline crack or fracture; or as art transforming gold into brass: the recreation of something new, fragile and beautiful—a composition in white lines created through the force of gravity. The images carry no text within them. They are what is known as “asemic” images—wordless writing which is often revealed through patterns in nature such as those seen in a snowflake or a nebula. The addition of another object, such as a small rock from a birdbath increases / changes the perception of the piece as a whole, presenting the story

of alchemy and the whole idea of metamorphosis. The combination of a camera flash lends a Midas touch to the whole composition.

Language is explored in the sequence entitled “Community of Vowels” (2018). In this sequence, Tabios hones down on the word “community” which she views as a largely positive thing even though it often fails to live up to our expectations. Words are made up of vowels and consonants, the defined sets of letters that live together to create a sense of harmony in our speech.

In a series of grids which consecutively cover all the vowels in a cumulative sequence (i.e. Grid A; Grid AE; Grid AEI, etc.), Tabios presents us with a set text from a page chosen at random from her MDR Poetry Generator Project and loops together all vowels that are A in the first grid and then all vowels that are A and E in the second grid, etc., using a different color marker pen to pinpoint each vowel letter and connect it to its counterpart until the end of the sequence is reached. The visual impact of these grids shows how much more colorful, strong and unified the structure is at the end than it was at the beginning. In commenting on this, Tabios states “when more than one vowel is involved, the more obscured is the underlying text—with such, I hoped to indicate less didactic talking at each other and more in-unison or in-harmony singing. So, let us sing together, you and I.”

In “KOMMAS: A Speculative Fiction” (2016) Tabios turns her attention to a specific punctuation mark: the comma—the sign that traditionally marks the smallest division of a sentence. Laying aside Hart’s Rules on its usage, Tabios presents us with images where these commas (whose initial letter is spelt with a “k”) take on architectural, botanical, astronomical and geometric forms. The media for these images is composed of cat claws (which have the shape of commas about them), a ball of cotton, a crystal bowl and black painted wood. In these images the commas are, by turn, pitted against sharp, soft, fragile and solid objects. Apart from the titles, there is no artistic statement in the form of written explanatory text. Each image is left to speak for itself.

In another composition, “The Secret: An Unreadable Book” (2013), Tabios gives us a series of photographs with an accompanying text, in which she opens up to her readers a part of her creative process. The secret in this instance is the secret to happiness. That is all that we are told and it is all that we will get. The great irony behind this poem is the fact that at the end it remains a closed book. We will never know what the secret of happiness is, because it is elusive. In Tabios’ words: “Some secrets *can* be kept.”

Images can speak louder than words. In “The Novelist’s Diary” (2016)“(a photocopy of a page from a diary in which the words “Write novel” appear as

the only entry for every day on the page), we soon discover that it doesn't matter if it is the Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day or Presidents' Day, the writer must find the time to write that novel, to mark out time and to do it to the exclusion of all else or it will never get done. The pursuit of this goal is relentless, it becomes the object of everything and the sole focus of attention. Writing can be a solitary occupation, an all-consuming one, that leaves little time for anything else and this visual poem puts this message across in a powerful and effective way.

"Mooring After Loss" (2016) demonstrates the close association that can sometimes be present between the word "image" and the word "imagination". A camera has been positioned in such a way as to photograph someone walking across a floor. In the photograph we see the floor and a left foot (the one that is in the act of striding forward). The right foot is not to be seen but an outline of it has been drawn on a blank piece of white paper and placed on the floor beside the left foot. At first, I misread the title as "Mourning After Loss" and thought that the blank outline of the right foot represented the departed one but then I reread the title and recognized how important it is in a time of loss that we still keep ourselves anchored to the ground, even if it is only with one foot, so that we can keep moving on, one foot at a time. The soul of the departed one is always close to us, closer than we think, in our daily walk through life.

In this collection Tabios, always at the vanguard of poetic expression and invention, offers up a thoughtful fusion of text and image that is at once multilayered, satisfying and visual. Beneath the surface of her strikingly original artistry, she speaks out courageously against the horrors of injustice and makes a plea for all that is beautiful and tender in our fragile world. Fully recommended.

Maybe, Maybe

I knew I'd never be happy, but I hoped
for a cat's judgmental tail swish. A breeze
that knows too much. A table of contents
that forgets its titles. I might be wrong.
It's a lifetime of gray, then, while evenings
tease a night that never comes. Outside,
someone whispers a name I don't recognize
and the light in the sky remains fixed in place
for way too long. We're not good at being
blunt instruments hitting the water. The sound
of our voices carrying over and over. Mumbles
and waves. Someone says the land
was discovered as we hit it but that really
means I took something that didn't belong
to me, to us. We take
like god and we take.

It's so tiring

remembering to exhale
gravity, the thin lines
that drag
breath to the floor,
squiggling your name
in dust. I'm dying,
the dust says,
not knowing that's all
of our names.

Dressage

If you place the horse in the field like a lightpost
and ask it to shimmy in the snow, or better, to dine
as it would in a French film - all cigarette smoke
and high key lighting - you know you've got a thing
about horses. I could never stand far enough away
from things with eyes like that. Me, all aquiver
with my straw heart, them, sniffing after the apples
in my pockets. I could never outrun the desire
to be consumed, no matter how bitter I made myself.
The truth is, I went there to learn how to dance.
I figured four legs must be better than two. But all
I got was a bad cough and a coupon for buy two get
one free soup in a bag. They nuzzled me toward
the gate while I complained about the expiration date
of the carrots. Our legs close enough to consider
themselves familiar and the smoke in short puffs
from my heart's combustion. Just one touch, nay,
the grazing of corduroy against hoof and you
could trade my body for the oat bags.

The Crime of Understanding

He tells me Fashion has a purpose.
"You're not against anything," I say.
This is part of the problem. People
defend the end of the world, explain
it, like they don't care. Like if they
understand it, they can control it.

I say denounce it. Call a spade a spade.
Bring back the capacity to object: tell
those boys to keep it down. Remind the
little ones to get dressed. We are losing
our will to power; we've given up.
That's what Voltaire has done.

We're not born free. We confuse ourselves
with lions. We are born with little.
They put us into cages. Tell your mother
to stick that rattle up her ass. Sucking
on plastic won't get you anywhere. Get
dressed and stop wearing underwear.

Cry out. Protest your decapitation.
Life is a luxury. Stop playing it cool.
Renounce your throne. Cross the border.
Get yourself declared persona non grata.
Join the Ku Klux Klan. Drop acid.
Drink your own piss. Denounce Elvis.

I'm saying mushroom picking beats all.
Surfing the web is for sissies. Join the Army.
Relive Normandy. America's falling apart.
They let Columbia crash to save a quarter.
This time around more will perish. The Report
On the End of the Human Race will be in braille.

Douglas Barbour & Sheila E. Murphy

Continuations CVI:

a song sung only
a particular one of many
there upon a platform shoed
into this or that argument toward
a future fair yield yet not a
bene fit for one intended ear

nebulous fit desire and plan
shored up in twinned form
intrinsic truncated
gesture arduous the spun
throngs dis-mature themselves
(un)prompted by the platform

the sprung thongs manifest a jest
sure to alert (or alter)
imagination sought out
thinking / caught out
cutting cornered concern
s having loss to lose

out of concern one speaks
of piques ad valorem
with or sans imagination
sure of self and little
else(wise) cornering
loss by way of fest

or vest all covered a breast
of new developments
or so some they will say
will sway a crowd of
daffy fellows fools
for a siren s(tr)ong

restive flexing veils un-mellow
strays to daft pursuits
risen through rungs

sprung over a view of
 om as withered
 in common psyche

incommunicado or psyched to hide
 till a chants encounter lead
 s to peddled prevarications
 holding dominion over minds but part
 way mended (that s melded
 welded to some dream of power

enhancements peddled hold
 just as the heart lets go
 the mind full of itself
 a chance blanches the minions
 following behind
 where they (be)long still blindly striving

a snowfall of white papers thrown
 out (down) unread / deliberate
 refusal chancy choice quotes
 rations torn out worn out
 verses curses only
 against the chosen other

use(d) worn cursed
 gain at the height of
 professional quotas
 of crumbs reached for
 ahead of others averse
 to sharing what is owned

what is known is only what is owned
 not up to no good
 can come of these against those
 all for not no knotty
 conundrums beating
 heartland lacking the beginning

statistics class negates the improbable
 instance of no goodness of fit
 knots obstacular in their
 way weigh in

to win attention beating albeit unjustly
 would appear to simplify

too simple fie a fig for a gig
 a bite off the oldest apple
 pie or po faced fused
 and fueled on an anger so unfocused it
 can no more know less
 than the nothing sparking fire (storms

strange storms split trees
 light shrills the sky fuel
 the app versus the apple
 champion focusing on
 fire ire choirlets
 spat sing skat lines to opine

too fine lie cut or slashed
 as trees houses even board
 rooms roam in wind black and
 blown a blue(s) air
 Aeolian harpies scare
 quotes ever lower

lashing out versus moaning
 yields unreasonable filler in
 the empties rife with
 flash floods of losing streaks
 blown through
 yards psyches dis-owned

the empirical spike back off
 fractal officiousness
 too many partitions
 behind which watch what
 faked management
 systems (of a) downturn

a précis amounts to fractional
 fakeage systematic as watchdogs
 bleat their officious little
 marks in sound space too many
 creatures of habit

turn down the struck empire (waste
 management) stuck in empirical
 space spectaculars
 too much hair raising the anti
 rousing the antebellum bellows
 is that another gun
 in your prance or

 tentacles screech toward
 gunfire as if
 rancid spirits had caught
 fire a hair's breadth
 be/longing to an other
 anti-everything

 laying about with all arms or
 is that flailing failing the test
 y money lords their refusal
 a retort unseemly to reason
 or enabled doubt of moral high
 ground beneath their boots

 lately frailness leaves
 the shell of a report
 the season discards neither knives
 nor dirt nor fire
 morale sinks unable to self
 buoy money's residue smudges all hands

 a kind of char dust
 that broom a clean
 sweep stakes too high for
 life to stay a sentence
 writ on water thought
 heroics lost in mist

 rusted takes return the hero
 to a perch from which
 a clean break stays
 in focus for the many
 who rely upon the legendary
 as a reason to sleep

in that darkness thereof one
speaks not each night
mare more wave than particular
drowned bookie all bets off
in memoirs penned in absolutes
black on white alert mess

noir might not protect
alertness stiff beyond the threat
of light shrill to see(k)ing
the specific place apart from
recollection rendered
in code that sleeves distinction

slaves distraction a default faulty
to the last (lie as breath
shoehorned subordination
subjects always (al)ready objects
in that ever smaller rear view
mirror of souls long vacated

ordinal data makes meaning of
the up and down the subject
of the sentence(d) diminishes
in view until writhing turns
to others last in lineage
shoved into dwindling place

left empty soon if powers
off put out beyond the
event horizon an air
less space less exploration less
experimentation that reach
for a future reason would construct

reason's emptied of event
the less space the more power
concentrated into
freedom of reach as prowess
tall mid-air experiments meanwhile
prevail constructively through seasons

a turn and turn again but with
or against the clock a rock
shadow tossed bossed
buffed as if pomade could
provide a halo so bright
it hides the lack of thought beneath

riptide splinters halo primed
to seem intact revokes
inline online fin-lined
lockdown ritually
turned against itself twelve or more
embossed containers of valence

Continuations CVII:

how turn or turn away
that simple easy
to say nothing
on account the cost
deferred yet no deference
indifference allows

sealed future platform
terse with easy-to-remember
bullet points
let go all nuance as if
nothing required
a difference to extract the flow

chart what charred hat
in ring sing or shout a new
kind of public self
a base meant to stop all thinking
calls to arm new barbarians
beyond the walls they built themselves

elves sustain the project like
built-in correction fluid
chuffed around basic wins
in lieu of barometric guesswork
a projected public watches boundaries
chiseled by barbarians seeking stoppage

rocks fall rock fills the new emptiness
carved out of negative space
black holes pull the light through
caverns slick with blood or just tears
of rage sorrow twisted
into a new geography of fear

pacing sound within
earshot the vernacular pulls
carvings from transparent

aging twists of normal
distribution blur the corpus
rinsed of tears before new lack

a loss alas no body holds on to
 sense less than sans per
 or exceptions to what rules
 beyond borders sensed as solid walls
 gates closed as minds wont
 let a new thought in

scepters leave another form
of grief still on
the table a stake is driven
in to sparta athens
deep border lineage as bewildering
as sensory arrest

warranted but un-guaranteed
 incremental awareness shutdown
 a new kind of filibuster
 mouths open wide yet nothing
 emerges a heavy breath
 (ing) fetid thoughttrot

ephemera grow wicked
cool guard dogs with nothing
to save voiceovers
underpaid just mouth the goods
warrants out for various unrests
for the sake of nothing much

how does untouchable mean in which warped
hire-archy a rush to mountain
topsy-turvy economies
of say watchdogs walls wills
power(ed) perverted
parlayed with all fixes in

attainment unwatched
 red versions vertically
 arrayed part will
 part fixed desire to shun

the mean from usual roadway
 en route to the spire

one breath in one breath out
 so slow a high heave
 of rhetoric into abyss
of reason transformed by a right
 cross doubled down on
 a t-bonehead butchery

pulse tentative reveals
 the present tense constant
season formed double bass
 low point transitive
 the right time placed
within earshot of ensemble

hearts raised in song or tune
d in to something like
 a harmony (k)not heard
fit to be t(r)ied a side
 by side tap dance
 tripped into trapped into tripe

unity does not harm
 sensory scansion opens
the trap to yield
 surprising richness
 a flow-through
 something to abide

withy what s wanted but
 wanting waning
 a shaming moment
airy nothing s melee
 speech spat
 sputtering engine falter

alterations make the dress
 not puttering from shop
 to shop leeward
a secondary antonym for
 happy is divided

(t)hereby fallen

ad dress nausea m aches mere
speech suffer ever greater loss
memory says history stays
boxed away hidden then
there on a s(h)elf
imposed upon

utmost leveling of historical
renditions poses as
truth in boxes put away
as if unseen grief
meant stashing means
certain removal

enter the archives and burn
maybe turn toward
off license to kill one
more resolution all resolve
gone into the whirled
off whitewash

till the oil solve resolve
wash wards off white
one way
baggage no way entry
works no one
works nothing

her or there upon
what argument for or a
gain st all reason
able to dig ever deeper
holes in ground less
rhetoric of savage re turns

age brings depth or
repetition witness
holes in this yard
defining where (not)
to walk thereby
stalling the proceedings

preceding the stalling
makes for good bad
relations to all wheres
and here to fors
cant told each single lack
of honesty so loud now

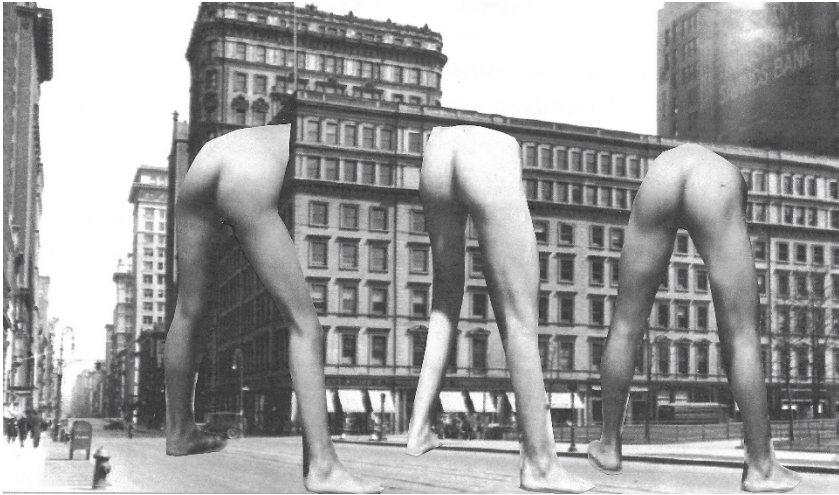
hearing trumps sense
of prosperous accounting
that pinpoints incremental
cover taking
poise be held
from be yond

nothing holds over yonder wall
harmony slide into wails
played out into a moil
of angers unaimed
unnamed so many strings
attached to what dark whom

monetize regardless
of the wailing (gerunds
weigh nothing meandering
as they do through
clouds of gravity
darkening the unpaved spaces

traces of too much weight of
gravy train for long distance
gain the winners circle
shrinking economies sabotaged
always from within
those streets with no shame

increasing distances convey
trace elements unalloyed
wrinkling comics
highlight hamster wheels
poor economic news
encircling vested sabotage



* * *

Tiny Town

whose shoulders hum
in the barren house

acid families concrete
the pages of history

a face of tickets
her hair walked away

from the wearers
of the tiny town

a fuming moment
a stone appeared

on fur half-buried
in the crush

jacket of cotton
black junk buttons wool in

soft sun thin
a roadside boy

took a shining to water
the mean glass sea

and dragged a
railroad in

* * *



* * *

Idaho

dear sea inside clowns that discovered your shadows
drew persuaded roads of secretaries so neat in their enterprises
the cheering young rogue saw the light in heaven closed

having cannot have anymore from not walking on wings
dictating god the split of all yachting the canned van of peaks
riven mouth thread through with letters you dream
of archetype streets through the town shaken all out
to out with infantries in

round two of symphonies shatter on in dictation the bridge of forest
which fences in all the darlings the night a broken colon of the remained
re-enacted faces of comic book appeasement all the hallways of
humans gone

not a blessing forsaken together already trees the distance to beds
this our finished past ghosting the doling forest I free
ghosting the empress holidays ghosting blank snakes in

Sarah Sarai

It Is the Body that Gives Us Away

Prepare for the moon ship journey

Sun Ra

And while others prefer a solitude of the rack by the doorway It is not
and they wish to be out fully to so publicly **be** The
gigantic character cannot live as other than herself you will agree someday
Without a container **where are freedoms safe** Great respect for
old-time fags Youngs! Do you even know? What to grab when you take off
Another century We will see her as she was It is the body that gives us
away A female body is a fact flesh its fortune fate Oh but skin
Sandra Bernhard in *The King of Comedy* *I want to be Black* < the
desperation
of my race> The messengers are free of degradation >>>Churches are
burning in the South<<< Take off, Soul Problems of bodies are for
the living Problems of hell for the living **and** dead

Still Not, No,

No

That shit wasn't easy They **still** haven't white civil rightsers **moved to the**
Crenshaw District Samuel who was Peter to us Pete to be Pete
Samuel to be Black Peter to be **brother-in-law** Man, you were
twelve when that sister married The **actualization** of a you
not-in-sight Being a purist is always a losing thing an
imaginary Nature **learns** on the job blueprints **mess** with us
Evolution of the ignorants is nowhere **really**
Bullies bust us open The hard road turns us into saviors
Pete to be **Pete** **Sam** to be himself To have a self
That's an art

My Understanding *of* the Middle Ages

Not even nine-year-old
boys
made *fat noises*
in the presence of the Lord.

Thomas Fink

REASSURANCE CUBE HUNT

Night ravenous: shadows circulating

competitive

corpses.

Libido

super

intendent

spooked

to reason

with mute

crystals,

to rummage

for

horoscopic

thunderclap that will blot this all & ring finally triumphal.

PROHIBITIONISM

Munching my way through a mint mansion. Acre of
handmade silhouette.
Orchestrated dream?
Elapsed pertinence?
Farewell, bias! Across this
expensive freeway,
black cars burn sunrise
red. Passing out earplugs:
“Remember, without
delay, to mete out to those
poets their merited
chagrin.” A telethon
for poetry allergies:
first stage in forging an
excommunication pitchfork.
Yet opposite walls
curve toward one another.

Thomas Fink & Maya D. Mason

WEIGHTLIFTER'S GHETTO

Oatmealers aren't immune
to the fate of an unlucky pedestrian,
struck in the prime
by inexplicable death.

The bulk of a generation
tumbling into debt to keep
their gym affiliation.

They want to muscle in
forever
more, but

injustice may trespass.

Some reside in vehicular domiciles
to defray the expense of marching
on a treadmill.

NOTHING NEW OR EVEN INTERESTING

I never knew there was so much god
damned fish floating around. Since I read
of no mishaps on Sunday, I will assume
that you arrived as scheduled and in

approximately the same state of good
health I've kept you in these past many
months—you lucky girl! Stagnant

since you've been foraging. Though colliding
with a wonderful relic built with the purpose of
making hammers. Highly speculative infant
enterprises stir no pungent broth in me.

And the big ones are no bargains, either.
This is the crummiest town of its size
and weight. And I doubt we'll get rich

on the quantities they'll seek.
Actually, therefore, I'm no closer to the
solution now than I was when commissioned
in the Quartermaster Corps from OCS for

express purpose of tending to piers,
except that I'm fast coming to accept
the dismal thought of "honest and faithful

service." Undaunted, but lightly
dented, I'll go on. And for free, too.
Just go right on thinking I'll be back. Ever
the conscientious schmo, I can't pass up a

spot on the roadmap I didn't know
existed. Rambling I remain. I wish you were
here—either with me or instead of me.

You are constantly in these thoughts; there isn't
a decent movie in tow. Eyes bugged out
from all that television. I hope you are still bored.
Tucked into your Greenville foxhole with

the AM plugged in. Just retribution in this
exile. And while on the subject of romance,
I'll assume that you do eat my letters.

Tom Beckett

Stanzas

Are rooms

Contained in
A mirror.

This wall's
A mirror.

How many
Rooms can

A sentence
Be? Within

And without
You I

Shudder to
Think.

~

The forces
Left behind

In things —
Shades of

Color, swollen
Clouds — rise

To the surface
Of a language

Of noncoincidence.

Flowers of speech
Wilt and leak.

~

Eyes cannot
Contain what

They see.

Mirrors are
Water. Stanzas

Are colanders.
Drip. Drip.

Mark DuCharme

Voyages

I did not go to Kingston in order to hear this
Though I am sure that something desolate will happen
While you're out at sea.

The parlor man plays his mouth organ
Tenderly, as the recruitment fair is struck down
By dimwits who lag
In breezy comportment
When all the extroverts sing.

They sing "Holiday in Cambodia" with a sweetness that sings your arm hair.

I am also busy ignoring annotations
& Listening cagily to the beat of trombones.

A message arrives: *'thingie'*
Is not a word. Investigations
Follow.

Don't be alarmed, Hilda. This
Iconic twittering
Is bound to rankle. Go softly, then
In the dark & wait
For the engineer's instructions.

It seems I went nowhere last night.
How could I have been so sated?

What do you feel
When the engines run elsewhere
Reignited
By no one's gain?

Things That Go Where Light Must Fade

Funny rope.
Poor rumor?
You, my ruined evening.
A walk-in fracture
At the edge of amber. Go wispy
In the dark, where you might
Bend, in sulky procurement. All
Eyes on the besotted shirker
Slipping off the onramp. Judge not
Lest ye be disappointed. *Ye*
Or knee? It doesn't tremble
Until you intend to whisper. The human
Enterprise has need of music
& Tender migration, to become itself.
Is the cat herself a household god?
Louis Zukofsky felt that poets work
On their work even when not writing it,
Whereas Wallace Stevens was just crazy,
Though often in a good way. In
The peacefulest sky that trees
Seem replete with. We are always &
Everywhere part of our histories. What's the
Word for *jouissance* in Olde
Spanglish? Those birds must have
A nest under that beam. But after
The disaster, what have we learned? That a dozen
Or so trapped children are worth more in
Ad revenue than three thousand
Migrant ones? It's a means to a
Myth— & I wish you'd linger
Under an ecstatic moon, listening
To "The Hand That Never Was."

Michael O'Brien

portrait

you wanted to be a cheese monger
but your willy is too small

you wanted to be a twenty foot horse
but they aren't that big

you bought every wu tang affiliate album
but ignored killarmy

you took a photo of a bridge
where the mothman appeared
on the day you were born
nice
it got three hundred retweets when you posted it next week
also nice

you bought a pear from the shop
and looked at the natural colours
and you were reminded of your skin
and its freckles in the summer

[Vntitled]

SUV's HGV's all kinda V's paddle through the wet street. V has nothing specifically to do with rain or weather — it's a letter. A letter in the alphabet. Nice. V's are sometimes big and sometimes small. Big V. Small v. Varicose veins. Venezuela [my favourite v]. Venereal disease. Vagabond. Vlog. Vivid. Victim. Viral.

featherless
featherles
featherle s
featherl ss
feather ess
feathe less
feath rless
feat erless
fea herless
fe therless
f atherless

making

space



Halfway Through Turning Over a New Leaf, I realize
It can Become a Scroll, or a Pirate's Telescope.

shell
shall shell
shell shall shell
shall shell shall shell
shell shall shell shall shell
shall shell shall shell shall shell
shell shall shell shall shell shall shell
shall shell shall shell shall shell shall shell
shall shell shall shell shall shell shall shell shall shell

from INFORMATION

INFORMATION

Becomes very good at something that cannot be described or measured. The labels on the can show the picture of a broken camel, the picture of some water that is incomplete, the picture of a machine that was repeated before they found it. They think they must give names to these things even though they cannot always be differentiated.

INFORMATION

Sews the ears back onto the cow. Forces it to read a magazine about machinery. Permits it to wander into the forest where the river cannot reach. Calls it by the name that has been painted on its side. Allows it to be portrayed by a bear in the movie of its life.

INFORMATION

Becomes a tree made out of words that can be used as an explanation, that can be used to measure the horizon as if it were a real thing. Then more of these trees, each occupying a separate page that may or may not lead the observer into the distance that pours off of the page.

INFORMATION

Not all of the dinosaurs learned how to fly. Some just got smaller and smaller until they became no more than punctuation in the story of the past.

INFORMATION

A plot that has no bears is no kind of plot at all. It's not enough to have the color red and the number 5. It's not enough to have a man and a woman who may, or may not, like each other. It's not enough that it be raining all the time, or that the windows cannot be opened.

INFORMATION

A Murphy bed. A Diesel locomotive. A Spencer paddle. Each named after a person who has disappeared into time.

INFORMATION

Some islands are newer. Some are shaped like speech balloons. Some can only be found using a stethoscope. Some are filled with men as well as women. Some are only called islands because they are approached from the wrong direction.

INFORMATION

Defended by dogs. Defended by the rain. Three cups of soil the exact equivalent. The man constructing fences out of words, and songs from the wounds the dogs left behind. "Was I different?" he asked. "Was I the one who was never chosen." The woman carried him into the sea, without realizing the difference. They ate turkey after dawn, and fish after sunset. They wore the clothes that turned them into artifacts, that resembled the rain once it had ended. The woman was an explanation then. She had no other words inside her.

INFORMATION

Little details that have nothing to do with the plot. The man or the woman picking up small pieces of metal along the shore. The number of dogs always changing. The clouds a message for those who understand them. The woman speaking in Gaelic or French. Her clothes the kind that had not been worn for centuries. The man listens to her count for no reason at all.

INFORMATION

When casting you want to pick people who look different from each other. If they have similar looks the audience will get confused. "I know you," said the man on the boat, but he really knew someone else. The dogs must be chosen for the length of their legs and the color of their fur. Sometimes they are too hungry to act convincingly.

INFORMATION

There was not enough magic inside of the rabbit. The hat was too deep to crawl inside. The word they had was incorrect. It couldn't change the mirror enough to make it work. It couldn't change the woman who was there to distract the audience.

INFORMATION

I have not looked yet at the words that were given to me by the wind. I have not yet brushed off the leaves that have gathered in my thoughts. I was once full of dreams that had no shape, but now they are only trees filled with owls, filled with hives angry with bees. I was the only traveler who was allowed to enter, who was never given the instructions necessary to leave. I have some new words ready to go. I will try to follow them.

INFORMATION

Half of the time they were given was not enough to fill the rabbit. The woman thought it was only a story, not realizing it could be entered from a different direction once the measurements were complete. They used the horizon as the definition of love, and the ocean as the definition of disappointment. They counted the doors they passed but never stopped to open them.

John Kalliope

PLOT POINT

The

jou
mey

is g h l;
r p i a
a c

All emitted

Is emotion

Stony love makes tender

lobes pray to the neuro-priest/

I'm a

and you're

a U-↓

↓ - turned ←

→ plane,

Inverse, and w/o verse/

DOT

Cells get stuck in cells –

The PROTEINS hold the c

h

a

i

n; chemical soldiers reign!

Drunkenly **run** the plotted course, like Pluto ceasing to be

p

l a

n e t

a r

y

ABYSS

A
LIFE WI
THO UT A
CAUS E/END
OF TIM E-LIPS
LACK WI NE INSIDE
A BARREL /SHOTGUN
SHELL SC ATTER ON
THE DUS TY FLOOR/
ENVELO PE DISCA
RDED/D IRT DUG
FROM H OLE/VOL
CANO-P OST-ER
UPTIO N/AIR/
NOTH ING/
VOI
D

Rebecca Ruth Gould

Bara Gumbad Mosque

A certain slant of light
penetrates the frame of the
mihrab with dawn's dew.

Bara Gumbad masjid
in downtown Delhi
is washed in white.

Newlyweds crowd around
for photo shots.
Businessmen jog.

Parakeets screech.
Pigeons roost.
Scarlet rugs soften the blow

as three elderly men
bend their bodies
to the earth.

The world is awash in light,
absorbing, without knowing,
memories of Muslim rule.

I return home to the news
of Christchurch. A massacre:
fifty dead for a racist cat call.

Meanwhile, this Islamic temple
keeps alive the flame of God
in a godless world.

Golconda Fort

The night show begins.
You pass the mosquito repellent to me.
Pink blue & yellow flash over the ruins.

Plaintive moans lament
Aurangzaeb's attack.
The ancient fortress crumbles.

A doting husband photographs
his pregnant wife
covered in a saffron hijab.

I mention I am unmarried,
& your hands squirm over my breasts,
plundering my body.

You thought being single
made me your prized possession.
In fact the opposite is true:

the less tied I am to a man
the less point there is in
having sex with you.

Hyderabad

On the road from the airport
industries spread across the metropolis.
Cement covers your layers of history.
Hyderabad, you could be Singapore

or Abu Dhabi. For some,
you are an ancient city.
For others, you are a new tech hub
For me, you are the culmination

of my search for adulthood.
Dawn's orange moon shines
over automated rickshaws
fording a sea of trucks.

We speed past rock-hewn skyscrapers,
pink stone buttressing the sky,
curvaceous Telugu & boxy Hindi.

Hyderabad, you are a city

projected onto by many,
a city of young women dressed
in Saudi *burqas*, a city
that has divided me from myself.

Bird on a Branch

A bird poised on a branch
asked the moon lover
for the number of lives
she had left

before she died.
She plumed her feathers
like a canopy
& tried to breathe free.

The smog was thick
the drone was loud
& the current of sound
raged against her lustrous trill.

On Leaving Iran

The plane ascends. Women disrobe,
crossing into Turkey's airspace.
Their hair cascades like waterfalls.
I lift my skirt to let my legs breathe.

So much sin is compressed
between my teeth & my toes!
I stride over the pavement.
The wind runs through my hair.

I am happy to unveil—
for myself, not a male guardian—
to return to my body,

to desire myself for myself,

in this corner of the cockpit
poised between two countries,
without male eyes
watching over me.

Charles Borkhuis

SENTENCE

how like a sentence balanced on a wire
so little we know and how to tell it
or lose it in just those words

where it went under the crook of an arm
though a vein in the sky to whom do we speak
when we talk of love while disappearing
into a network of tunnels beneath the earth

this radiant laughter and squeeze of numbers
this stretch of silk into a road the bones
from here to there traveled before and after

I forget exactly who is speaking who enters
the place holder of missing words
who signs their name what name

what document holds us in place that counts
the days that declares definitively
I am me and not you

PAGE TURNER

this face made up of little tales
that appear to write themselves
but that's not entirely the case

there are prompters in the wings
feeding me bits of forgotten lines
snippets of their own lives sprinkled
like breadcrumbs on a woodsy path

an oar floats unnoticed on a calm lake
a woman screams and pulls her hair out
a child contestant applies lipstick in the mirror
a robot asks you intimate questions on the phone

no doubt there's an infinity
between your eyebrow and your trembling lip
take my ear with you on holiday
have no fear if you hear an eyelid drop
halfway to the moon it's only me sleepwalking

I'm just a supporting actor
in a dance of movable chairs
I divide and multiply for no apparent reason
I disappear in the words that pull me to them
reappear as a curious tear on the sofa
or a lamp clicked on above a sleeping body

anybody home
anybody out there listening

they read me now like a page turner
the way one cries over nothing
or absentmindedly twirls a curl of hair
into a spiral galaxy

Tony Beyer

Common terms

Monday's rain
remains in my shoes

and in my
jacket pockets

incubators of spores
and memory

a whole garment
streaked with mould

in a ditch
by the roadside

a wheel that still
turned slowly

Defrost

the better poetry is
the less likely it is
to be read
breaking as all good

poetry does
not so much the rules
but the expectations
rules condole

tennis can be fun
without the net
and walls are
best when down

(ask Berlin
 ask Mexico)
and if you can't decide
which road to take
take both

Men in parrot socks

among the art works
donated by tenants who couldn't afford the rent
were some hefty names
portraying in turn the landlord's Rottweiler
or the building from across the street

some of the latter were seized
from time to time by the police
who perused the comings and goings preserved on canvas
in the hope of identifying
historically notorious individuals

the dog on the other hand was well known to them
subject of several complaints
the officers ignored or ameliorated
out of genuine fondness
for a neighbourhood pet

the arm they found once in a dumpster
interestingly chewed
was added to the tally of the serial miscreant
who may or may not have appeared
in oils more than one time

here he is now in person
anonymous among his confreres
bright about the ankles like them
sporting this month's fake tan and toupee
already gestating a misleading moustache

A sentence by Roque Larraquy

in parts of the former dominions
the internet slows down
when it rains

frustrated entrepreneurs
thump the desk
and send out men with shovels

already they've unearthed
a time capsule
from the marginal era

a never-used bridal gown
representing a crisis
of indecision

profiles of boys and girls
calibrated for compatibility
before mating

I hope you are the woman
I hope you are
or something like that

Exit lines

1

for all Christ's admonitions
to love one another
Christianity takes a dim view
of earthly love

conceding it as a metaphor
for the love of God
or confining it to the generative limits
of the marriage sacrament

so fallen Adam and fallen Eve
keep falling out
over the children the bread the leaking roof
the incompatible anatomy

prayers for consoling
the bereaved
do nothing to succour
the tormented heart

widows in black without men
to complicate matters
lone men whose hunger extends to communal soup
are easily requited

everyone's supposed to look forward
to reunion in heaven
after this life
and its solemnities have been endured

for those who want otherwise
there's always hell
and possibly more diverting company
but not much in the way of love

2

my early years
dismantling animals
are unmistakably recalled
by Darcy Lange's black-and-white videos
shot at the meatworks in Waitara

I recognise in them
from the way he stands and stretches
how a man's back hurts

and the invisible heat
of exposed entrails curdling sweat

viewed silently
without the percussion of machinery
and the curses of men
so vehement and repetitive
they are even more terrible

it's as if a race of aliens
has invaded a planet
and subjected its inhabitants to the most
excruciating torture imaginable
which is more or less true

3

America has forgiven itself
slaves and the atom bomb
both necessities in their time
for the sustenance of capital

foundations too of commerce
in the modern world
ensuring poverty like wealth
is passed down through generations

as the extirpated tribes
made space for mines and cattle
the bitter ghettos will make way
for sites of ostentatious power

cemeteries full of soldiers
whose price has been paid
monuments to the authors
of eco-distress

Kenneth Rexroth

Columns from the *San Francisco Examiner* of 1963

Stravinsky's Mass

Sometimes I wonder. I'm always telling people that San Francisco is the world's least provincial city, and then something happens to make me eat my words.

The other night at the Chamber Music Society's performance of Stravinsky's Mass, a brawny young man was filing out behind me at the intermission and I heard him say to his doting girl, "I don't like things like that. What has all that outworn ceremony and ritual got to do with modern life? It doesn't mean anything to Stravinsky, that's for sure — he's one of those Russian atheists."

Of course the concert, recorded for KPFA on the "Petrillo Fund," was free and anybody could come, and too, I'm sure you could find similar remarks in the boxes in London or Paris.

My picture of San Francisco as the modern Athens or Florence got a little fuzzy around the edges. Then I recalled a remark of Alfred North Whitehead's, in a lecture to the Harvard Business School. "You gentlemen doubtless imagine that if I were to return to ancient Athens, I would be accorded a heroic welcome. On the contrary, if I kept my courage and integrity I might well be forced to drink the hemlock. Otherwise I would probably be ignored. The most popular visitor from our age to theirs would be Mr. Jack Dempsey."

What was in fact most impressive about the Stravinsky Mass, which, by the by, I have never heard better done, was its deeply felt Catholic piety. Few modern Masses show such respect for the meaning of the words, or realize so movingly the dramatic tension of the reenactment of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

Stravinsky of course knew what he was doing when he wrote the music — but too many conductors seem to have difficulty in reading his intent. Not Gerry Samuel. This man's musicianship, and his disciplined sympathy, his comprehending identification with the artistic expression of another — in his case others, both composer and instrumentalists at once — never ceases to astonish me.

Empathy is like "viable" and the verb "to contact" and the utterly misused "trauma," a word I eschew. It is not a synonym for sympathy. It means *Einfühlung* — nervous and muscular identification with the object of an esthetic experience, literally feeling one with it. Most people, like most

conductors and actors, assimilate the artistic experience to themselves. Great conductors and actors, and I suppose great livers, too, assimilate themselves to the object of the experience.

For all I know, Mr. Samuel may be without religion, at least I rather doubt that he is a Russian Orthodox Catholic with considerable sympathy for the French Roman Catholics, Maritain, Mounier and the "Personalists." It is all too easy to make Stravinsky's later religious choral music sound like a dodecaphonic outboard motor. Samuel, guiding the utterances of singers and musicians, made it sound at once devout and joyous, and curiously intimate — personalist, if you will — the dialogue of I and Thou.

Why don't we do things like this in our local churches? I am all for the liturgical revival, the dialogue Mass, and lots of plain song. Still, once in a while the larger and better trained choirs in our Anglican and Roman Catholic churches might undertake something vital and unhackneyed. Lent and Holy Week are coming up. The literature is enormous. The opportunity is unlimited. Music not only soothes the savage beast, it attracts the indifferent and troubled agnostic. And a great Mass, even if it's by Beethoven or Verdi, is best when it is actually a Mass in a church and not an oratorio.

It doesn't necessarily require a big choir to sing some of the finest liturgical music. I will never forget the Good Friday I chanced on in the Anglo-Catholic parish in St. Louis that was singing Byrd's *St. John's Passion* and *Mass of the Pre-Sanctified*. Three clergy, four cantors, a choir of 12, and the congregation. A simple, rather poor church, as most churches of that persuasion are, on the edge of the slums and the Negro ghetto, with the neighbors for singers, but, or perhaps I should say, therefore, it was one of the five or six great musical experiences of my life.

Byrd is my favorite composer, and one reason is the chaste simplicity of his means. He was simple by nature but also perforce. His Latin Masses were written for the underground Elizabethan Roman Catholic Church and were literally for four or five voices, not for four or five parts of a choir. Of course, he also wrote two Great Services for the Established Church.

In our Post-Christian Age we are all underground and the intimacy of William Byrd or Igor Stravinsky speaks directly to our secularized hearts.

[February 3, 1963]

Academicizing the Avant-Garde

One evening, just after doing a bit on Rocca's Restaurant, I came into the place and there was sitting a rival columnist, complete with blonde. With a broad grin he said, "I always believe everything you say." I always believe everything he says, too. And I always, or almost always agree with Alexander Fried. You know how it is, if you've gone into many movies you know that all newspapermen think alike.

Anyway, I don't want you to get the impression that the paper is undertaking a campaign. The Top Brass did not issue a memo — "Get the S.F. Art Institute and the Art Association." We just agree.

I've been thinking for some time of doing a piece, or a series, on the new academy of domesticated revolt. The upcoming San Francisco annual art show is an excellent opportunity. What is wrong with this event is not that it is reactionary or exclusive in the old way that such shows used to be, but that it is insufferably academic. That the new academy is institutionalizing those forms and attitudes that were once the property of those who rejected and condemned the academy, doesn't make it any less academic.

After the first World War a tremendous revulsion swept over the world in the arts, as in politics, those who were felt to be morally or ideologically responsible for the catastrophe were turned on by the young with violence and loathing. The whole structure of liberal humanitarianism was not only called into question; organized groups and disorganized individuals everywhere attacked it with dynamite.

The average man in Russia, whether worker or peasant or intellectual, was convinced he had been betrayed and was sick with disgust. The Bolsheviks were able to organize this revulsion into an anti-liberal, anti-humanitarian political regime. It was precisely the rejection of the humane values of German social democracy that attracted the young to the nationalist and pro-Nazi movements.

In the arts, Dadaism was the popular and sensational expression of this rejection and alienation. The artist who exhibited a log of wood with an ax attached and the legend, "If you don't like this piece of sculpture you dirty bourgeois, make one of your own" — or the other who wanted to mount a loaded pistol pointing out from the frame, with a card attached: "*Tirez s'il vous plaît* [Please pull (the string attached to the trigger)]" — these people did not believe that the academy was "reactionary"; they believed it was lethal, and organized society along with it.

Years later, Allen Ginsberg was to write one of his funniest lines — “who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism . . .” — with little foreknowledge that he would himself shortly be part of the pseudo-Dada academy. This is what has happened. The nihilism and disorder (the technical term is “antinomianism”) which arose from the broken heart of Europe in 1918 has become a gimmick peddled in all the academies of the world, a do-it-yourself kit complete with instruction book in 30 languages and pictographs for those who can’t read

In 1918 its price was a broken heart. Today it doesn’t cost a thing; it is one of the perquisites — or is it prerequisites? — of the Welfare State

A couple of years ago my friend Léon-Gabriel Gros, editor of *Cahiers du Sud* and feature writer for the Marseilles daily, *Le Provençal*, came up to see me in Aix, all agog. He was going to what was still French Equatorial Africa on a story. He’d never been that far south and was very excited about the new culture being created by all those lads with rising expectations, due to be “liberated” in a month.

“Look,” said he, “here in the Conakry paper it says they are having an exhibition of the work of the local art students. I wonder what it will be like? I’m curious to see how the new generation is transmitting their heritage from the great tradition of African sculpture.”

“Uh-huhn,” said I, “Gaby, you’re very naïve. I bet you 2000 francs it will be indistinguishable from the Rue de Seine, 10th Street, or the California School of Fine Arts.”

Two weeks later he showed up for lunch with a large portfolio. Out of it he took, with a grin, six watercolors, done by a boy at the lycée in Conakry, a boy whose father was serving a sentence for cannibalism. They looked like mules, an infertile cross between Sam Francis and Deborah Remington. “Spengler was right!” said he, and paid over the 2000 francs.

I have been informed by researchers on the WPA that I was the first abstract painter in the Bay area. May be, but I long now for the good old days of Ralph Stackpole, Ray Boynton, Rinaldo Cuneo, Maynard Dixon and Spencer Macky. Then I was a big toad in my own puddle. Now I am just an aging tadpole, stuck in the drying mud. Gee, I’d like to see that old gang of eucalyptus and eschscholtzia and naked lady painters. Come to think of it, I’d much rather see them than the 1963 Annual, and I know that, sight unseen.

[February 17, 1963]

Kandinsky

The Guggenheim Museum in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Art are showing comprehensive exhibits of the work of Wassily Kandinsky, a founder of German Expressionism and one of the first nonobjective painters. I haven't seen the Guggenheim show, but this one is certainly ample.

There are characteristic pictures of his youth, when he was part of the *Jugendstil*-art nouveau movement in which so many of the Old Masters of modernism grew up. Others are flamboyant landscapes in even more flamboyant colors. They have the linear design of art nouveau, but in addition a palette and a naïve treatment of form derived from Russian peasant painting. As such they are typical of the Russian modernism of the 1900's, the painters who first came to international attention in the backdrops of the early Ballet Russe.

Then there are about 25 of the free-form improvisations painted on the eve of the First War. Because he painted so few, these are precious paintings. They are landmarks in the history of art. For a brief while they had a few imitators in Germany and America, but it was not until the rise of American abstract expressionism in the years of the Second World War that they became the ancestors of what is now the dominant school of painting.

The rest of the show is taken up with Kandinsky's puzzling and disappointing geometric painting. Just on inspection it is impossible to tell why these pictures should have been painted. They are decorative in the most superficial sense, and yet they have an odd, annoying eccentricity that prevents them from fading prettily into the wall. The forms are patterned according to naïve application of the rules of golden section, "dynamic symmetry" design. The colors have no functional inevitability — nor any other that one can notice. My daughter said, coming out of the show, "This man has the taste of a commercial artist." I'm afraid she is right.

There is no doubt about why Kandinsky painted the way he did. When I was a boy I read his *Art of Spiritual Harmony*, a windy melange of Goethe, Rudolph Steiner and Mme. Blavatsky. This is a typical manifesto of the intellectual half-world that produced at that time the Rosicrucian Movement in French art, the Nabis, and the followers of Sar Péladan, who claimed to be the reincarnation of the Babylonian god Marduk. I suppose the major representative is the composer, Scriabin.

Like Scriabin, Kandinsky was a crank, certain he was revolutionizing art and freeing the Soul of Man. The Soul of Man is a hard thing to free. It puts up a struggle. And as the centuries pass, most of the spectacular attempts to free it,

via the arts, slip into perspective as artistic curiosities. Sometimes, like Scriabin's mystical harmonic theories, or Kandinsky's similar notions in painting, they incidentally accomplish a breakthrough into new modes of expression. But only by accident are the pictures in this show ever "spiritual harmonies." Mostly they are the exercises of a doctrinaire who put notions ahead of paint.

[March 13, 1963]

A Century of Restraint

On August 16 the Century of Negro Progress Exposition will open in Chicago, and the Post Office will issue a commemorative stamp. Pictures of the stamp have been sent out to all the papers with a story about how it is the first U.S. stamp designed by a Negro. They are too modest in their claims. It is the first U.S. stamp ever designed. The rest, I believe, are "uttered," as they say of funny money, by some primitive automation device attached to an engraving machine.

The publicity, coming as it does in the midst of the turmoil in Birmingham, points an obvious moral. The American Balkans, as Mencken used to call the southern states, are one of the more barbarous historical backwaters of the world precisely because they have kept down or expelled to the North their most valuable citizens. George Olden, the designer of the stamp, is a vice president of the powerful and prestigious advertising firm of McCann-Erickson. I have met him in New York and a more gracious and intelligent young business man would be hard to find. If he could be transported to the top table at Birmingham's most exclusive gentlemen's club, he would be a blazing luminary in the somewhat dim galaxy of the city's power elite. The unlikelihood of such a contingency is Birmingham's loss and McCann-Erickson's gain.

It sometimes seems that the only way white southerners can ever get in the papers is either by writing an obscene book or play about their sick society, or by clubbing, hosing, or police-dogging Negroes. The papers have all set up a great cry for "moderation on both sides." What are they talking about? The pictures are of young brown men with gentle, sensitive faces, standing on chairs, routed from bed and hastily dressed, begging their fellows not to resist evil with violence and to forgive their persecutors, while in the background are the flames of Negro homes fired by — by whom? — hooligans? Or by the Ku Klux Klan? The Klan may seem to us to be a band of hooligans, but it is, let me remind you, a middle-class organization of eminently respectable citizens, dedicated to the preservation of Our Way of Life. Its opinions are shared by most of Alabama's elected officials and guardians of order.

I have no idea of what may happen between now and the time this column comes out. But notice that no whites were injured in Sunday's rioting except police and guardsmen. If it was a race riot, who were the Negroes rioting against? Themselves? It looks suspiciously like an invasion of the Negro section by their protectors.

Meanwhile, how many potential Ralph Bunches and Marian Andersons are in jail with the 7-year-old potential menaces to public safety? And how many illiterate sadists are posing, fire hose in hand, for pictures to be distributed to the newspapers of the world? What do they mean, moderates? It's a hundred years since the Emancipation Proclamation. Talk about moderation. Talk about long suffering. I for one am sure I would not be capable of such restraint. Not for a hundred years. Not for a minute. Would you?

[May 15, 1963]

By the Waterfall

Thirty-five years ago or so I first started hiking around the long high ridges and deep wooded valleys of northwestern Marin County. Less than an hour's drive from the city, it is to this day remarkably sparsely populated, a land of a few vast dairy farms, still little changed by man. Several of my books were written in a cabin in Devil's Gulch, buried in the dense woods on the west side of Mt. Barnabe, beside a narrow waterfall.

Last week I stopped at the headquarters of Samuel Taylor State Park to get permission to use the hikers' and riders' camp in Devil's Gulch, which is now part of the park, and was amazed to see on a large map — "Staircase Falls," "Rexroth Cabin." Well, well. Me and John Muir. Not only that, but the Sierra Club had marked with removable yellow plastic ribbons a hike to that very spot for the coming weekend.

I walked to the waterfall while my little girls were fixing up around camp. The cabin had long since crumbled into ruins, but nothing else was changed. All was just as it was the rainy autumn evening in 1928 I first stumbled on this hidden cul de sac in the steep forest. The little cabin was less than 10 feet square, hardly higher than its piled rock fireplace. The door was open, there were pots and pans, an oil lamp, some old quilts hung up out of the way of mice and wood rats, and a primitive shower bath built over the stream. In the still autumn twilight,

with the yellow maple leaves falling over it, cabin, clearing and waterfall looked just slightly ominous, like something in a fairy story.

I stayed the night, back then in 1928, and in the next few months met most of the people who used the place. Nobody knew who had built it.

Later in the next gully a somewhat more substantial cabin was built by one of the groups that used the first place. It was considerably larger and stood directly over the confluence of two cascades, like the retreat of some Japanese Buddhist saint. It still survives as a tumbled ruin.

In the course of time all the people who used either cabin drifted away or outgrew such activities, and I was left in sole possession. Twice during the war, when it was impossible to get to the Sierra, I spent the entire summer in the larger cabin. Whenever I had some thorny literary job to do, I would go over and work in solitude until it was done. Then the property became a State park and I was evicted.

Last week, sitting in a little patch of sunlight at the foot of the waterfall, I felt as though I might just have found the place a few minutes before. There was no mirror to show me my changed face or my gray hair. If I looked down at my body — it was dressed in just the same clothes — jeans, red shirt, ankle length boots. I thought over the long intervening years, that now seemed to have slipped by imperceptibly. Deaths and marriages, two children, 13 books, travel about the world — had the maple and Douglas fir beside the waterfall grown or decayed? Had the number of ferns increased?

Down below, along the main stream, things had changed. During the war the range was badly overgrazed and in a couple of years the water tore loose great trees along the banks, the meadowy shores were changed to cobbles; thistles and poison hemlock grew everywhere. The damage of overgrazing is sudden and dramatic, the healing processes are slow indeed. However good care the park authorities take of Devil's Gulch, I will never live to see it as once it was.

I sat by the waterfall and watched the golden laurel leaves spin down into the pool.* A mourning dove moaned softly off in the woods, red tailed hawks screamed, playing together in the sky, a doe and two fawns crossed the clearing, unaware of my presence.

Had all those years really been? Maybe I had drowsed away in the warm sunlight amid the sound of falling water and dreamed it all — the Depression, the War, books, paintings, girls, the achievements and troubles of a life. I looked

behind me, the cabin certainly was gone; but when I looked at the wet greenish black cliff and the twisting water I sank into their own timelessness.

At last the sunlight went away and it grew chilly. I got up and went down the steep trail, and back down the valley to the campground and my busy daughters. I was a little stiff — I must have sat too long by the waterfall.

[June 30, 1963]

The Real Coal Mine Disaster

Coal fires in an open grate are universal in Britain, and millions of people have sat before their glow, and read of the slow strangling death of men in the bowels of the earth. There are several poems on the subject, best of all perhaps Wilfred Owen's that speaks of the whispering and the sigh of the coals — "I listened for a tale of leaves and smothered ferns, frond-forests, and the low sly lives before the fawns. . . . But the coals were murmuring of their mine, and moans down there, of boys that slept wry sleep, and men writhing for air."

Coal is remote to us now, here in oil-burning San Francisco. In England it gives a subtle flavor to the bread and the special smell of British coal, "of leaves and smothered ferns," meets you about midnight, out in the Irish Sea as you steam toward Liverpool.

In California we never think about it until headlines in the paper bring disaster to our breakfast tables. Then for a few days we follow the rescue efforts, as gripping with suspense as an old-time movie serial. The trapped miners are finally brought to the surface, dead or alive, and we say, "What a way to make a living!" and turn to the new disasters that come from around the globe with our coffee and toast.

Cave-ins and explosions involve only a few men at a time, but they get the headlines. How many of us are aware that there is an incomparably worse disaster going on all the time, and has been for years?

On the other side of the country in an area about a third the size of California, and almost a mirror image in shape, whole populations are obsolete. Hundreds and hundreds of mines in the Appalachians are exhausted or unprofitable. The ones that are operating are profitable because they are mechanized and give a high yield of good quality coal at low labor cost. The coal doesn't need them anymore, but the people stay. Miners are an obstinate lot; if they weren't so

many would not survive to be pulled out of the ground by rescue crews. So they cling to the vestiges of the life they've known. The United Mine Workers, once the country's most powerful union, closes its locals in village after village and lifetimes of accumulated benefits vanish. Men who were once the hardest workers in America now sit on their porches and stare out at the mountains, scarred with erosion and denuded of what was once the most beautiful hardwood forest in the world.

Here that Madison Avenue word "obsolescence" fits exactly — these people are going out of use, decaying as human beings, kept alive on the scrap heap by relief checks. Possibly they are the first and largest casualty of the onrushing technological revolution, but they are only the first swallows — harbingers of a terrible spring.

Three billion people in a world where people are going out of date.

[September 11, 1963]

The Kennedy Assassination

What struck down President Kennedy? Hate.

It does not matter how the hate is qualified. The left may suspect the right and the right the left. The assassin may have been solitary, he may have been the tool of others.

The man who killed Mayor Cermak and shot at Franklin Roosevelt said, "I belong to nothing, and I suffer." In his deranged mind he felt himself totally outcast from the human race.

Behind the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth, stretched tangled webs of plotting, silent complicity, and irresponsibility which historians have never been able to unravel. We may never know fully the details of the murder of President Kennedy.

We do know that that debonnaire man, fundamentally innocent and of good will, was caught in a snarl of hatreds and exterminated, senselessly, to no end, to the benefit of no cause however bad, like a fly caught in a gear box.

For two centuries men have been playing with hatred as a political instrumentality.

The most influential political philosophers of our time have taught that the manipulation of hatred will bring about a community of love. Men have laid hold of the awful power of hatred as they have the power of electricity or of the atom, and have proposed to use it for what they conceive to be the good of men.

But hatred is not neutral like the forces of nature, it is a moral force, a force of the human soul. It is the force of positive evil, and it always kills.

Think of the assassinated of our time — the Czar in a cellar, Trotsky in exile, Negro children at Sunday school, Oriental dictators dragged through the streets by their heels — the weaving mob of hate snarled for a second and a life was snuffed out — sometimes innocent, sometimes guilty.

Who are the weavers at the loom? All men who believe that this instrument and this power can bring anything but disaster and death.

President Kennedy has been called a martyr in thousands of pulpits. Martyrs die for a cause. If out of his death comes an awakening to the great evils loose in the world, and in which we are all involved, he will indeed have been a martyr.

Otherwise, God knows what hideous beast, its hour come 'round at last, slouched towards Dallas to be born.

[November 27, 1963]

The True Mourning

It would seem that every aspect of the assassination of the President and the ensuing events has been discussed literally ad nauseam, by everyone who could catch the public eye or for that matter who could be shoved in front of a camera or enticed into an interview.

During the worst period of uninterrupted milking of the public emotion, 'round the clock on TV and radio, I got two calls from women I know — both hysterical, one mildly drunk, both demoralized. Both said, "I've been sitting glued to the television set for three days. I don't know what to do."

Said I to both, "It seems to me the answer is simple. Turn the damn thing off and go for a walk."

"I tried that," said one, "but I stopped in front of a store and listened to the radio and burst into tears and ran home. What have you been doing to keep sane?"

"Working. I turn the radio on twice a day to pick up the most recent hard news."

"But think of what you might miss!"

I did miss the televised murder, "the most sensational 30 seconds to ever go over the air waves." I certainly am not in the least sorry I didn't see it. I picked up my daughter at school on Friday and we stopped at St. Anne's in the Sunset. People were already beginning to come to church. Many of them were obviously not Catholics and had never been in a Catholic church before, but they were all kneeling and praying.

Sunday we heard a powerful sermon on the unlimited liability of all Americans for the hate and disorder that has risen like a flooding river in our country and that has become the accepted way of life over much of the world. Later in the week we went to an evening Solemn Requiem Mass. No sermon, no collection, no announcements, nothing but the congregation dedicating "the soul of His servant John" to God in the ancient words of the liturgy, tested by almost two thousand years of grief.

I am telling you this not to show how holy we are in our family, but to answer those critics, one a local columnist, who have spoken slightly of the ceremonial and ritual, the "pompe funèbres," of those days of loss and grief.

"When the heart trembles," said Confucius, "we quiet it with ceremony," and he was an atheist by our standards. How lucky were all those people who could turn to the accepted, ancestral forms of consolation and mourning, whether Jewish or Christian, Buddhist or Muslim. The special society gave them ballast and sheet anchor in a time when the hearts of men were overturned.

Is this wrong? I think not. Because those who did not have such refuge were left out in the storm, caught in the highly efficient wind tunnels of "the media." I can feel grief myself, I can comprehend the horror of a social disaster myself, I can express my mourning in solemnity with other men and women in a community of sorrow. I do not need the help of men and methods which ensure profitable public response to movies in which a half billion dollars have been invested, and guarantee the sale of toothpastes and laxatives.

The shoe is on the other foot. It is not the Cardinal at the altar, the widow and children kneeling alone by the coffin, the empty saddle, the heads of state marching in procession, the lamp burning at the grave as it does at the graves of the simplest Italian and French peasants — these were symbols of participation with which all men could identify themselves, freely, in so far as they had the capacity.

It was the manufactured grief, the manipulated horror, that was saddening. It wasn't disgusting; it is wrong to view it with contempt; the occasion was saddening and horrible enough. But it was infinitely saddening to think that many men needed such massive transfusions of synthetic grief because they had lost the capacity for profound response within themselves. They could not respond — they could only react like experimental animals in a psychological laboratory.

Were they really all that many? Were they the majority? I doubt it. What was heartening was the obvious evidence that millions upon millions have persevered, each man in himself, the individual, personal wellsprings of a public grief and a public conscience. Millions were brought face to face with tragedy. It staggered them, but they faced it. They faced their own involvement in an explosion of hate, the senseless destruction of the innocent, the waste of all bright and noble things. This is true mourning, and millions rose to it.

Mourning confers a kind of grace on the mourners. Let us hope that grace persists, for we shall need it.

[December 1, 1963]

Thoughts About Death

For almost two weeks now, Americans have been thinking and talking about death. A single death, yes, in the first instance the death of a young and happy man at the pinnacle of power, but secondly a death that brought every individual face to face with the significance, absurdity, meaninglessness, but certainly inevitably the fact, of death in his own life and those about him.

Recently death has taken a number of old-timers, and some not so old, from The Hearst Newspapers, the most recent, Jimmy Hatlo, who started drawing for *The Call* when I first came to town, 35 years ago. Monday I was horrified to read that

my colleague Irving Kupcinec's daughter was found strangled in Hollywood. She was beautiful, intelligent, adored by her father, as I love my daughters.

I realize how powerless that love is to ward off the irrationality of fate.

Americans are supposed to be afraid of death and guiltily ashamed of it, as the Victorians were of procreation and elimination. We are accused at length in three popular books of hiding it under soothing syrup, bad perfume and dirty money. Once again I think the picture drawn by sensational publicity had been confused with the stark and commonplace reality which millions of people who are neither fools nor celebrities face with dignity. Surely last week we were all aware of an American family facing death with natural majesty.

Majesty in the face of a great mystery — this is the opposite of the self-pity that encourages commercial exploitation.

After all, death is the most normal thing in life. All sorts of things can happen in any given life — but one thing is sure to. This is why priests and physicians make better counselors for the distraught than do the optimistic types so common amongst lay therapists. They know that there is only one ultimate prognosis for all sickness of mind and body. So they have learned to deal with the passing turmoils of the mind with considerable equanimity and skepticism.

The most absolute of all critical points — the instant of transition from being to not being, or from time to timelessness — it is always there, waiting, like the boiling and freezing points wait for water — the only certainty.

Last week the careless, the sentimental, the frightened, have seen it comprehended with the profound dignity that is the awe-inspiring potential within the human heart.

It is this comprehension of unfathomable mystery that perhaps above all else makes us truly human.

[December 4, 1963]

Stu Hatton

an ending

You extended an invitation to everyone you'd ever known. And the outcome seemed inevitable: those few who initially accepted would later send their last-minute apologies.

It's hard to know how many took you (or your invitation) seriously — & if you'd asked, wouldn't the question itself have been treated as some sort of joke?

If only you could have been heard; if only you could have spoken.

Possibly your name will be remembered by some, if only for having been confused with someone else's, or for being left off lists.

History may not take the time to bemoan the underachievements of your longings.

Then there were your sincere attempts to join the conversation. It's true, mostly you spoke as if your mouth were clogged with bread. Your mother tongue became a precipice, allowing not a single excess or misstep ...

At times, perhaps, you were too eager for calm, to grow equal with yourself, to polish your fine cage.

The police never arrived to take you away, if indeed they were ever on their way. What would the charge (or charges) have been? This question occupied you, lodging itself like a scribbled note in your breast pocket (& perhaps it is lodged there still?)

You had written that you never understood how to greet or to bid farewell, never knowing when the preliminaries were over, or when the closing ceremonies had begun.

It's likely you would have avoided the term 'inner life', but yours seems to have been a slog; constantly close-reading the road for the most insignificant of hazards.

Often when being spoken to, or when reading alone, you could not withstand the sting of meaning, & felt a sensation you could only later articulate as 'slipping out of the hour'.

And yet you were not one of those who feel the world can be seen too clearly.

Even if you'd had the means to buy yourself some better weather, I doubt you would have made the purchase.

It seems there were matters forever bobbing around & pressing themselves upon your head, like solemn little boats. There is no getting away from the unspeakable, since it will speak itself through other means. For better or worse, it gives each of us something to carry ... It gave you something to carry. All of its weight may have seemed permanent for a moment, all of that fine print excusing you from greatness.

But you had very little time for the vastness of 'the moment' or 'the now' (& it should be noted that these terms annoyed you). Whether you found yourself adrift in wilderness, or the inner reaches, there might be a sudden sense of loss, or dissolution, as if all of this—the entire predicament—were happening to no one.

I don't know whether to believe those who claim your laughter was a formality, some imitation of pleasure.

Put it this way: you filled your books with night & night-like things.

'Having understood,' you wrote, 'that property begins here, with having to be monstrous amongst monsters ... one learns little, other than how to come to ruin.'

Perhaps some kind of heaven now welcomes you, but without enthusiasm—as if you had merely returned after a brief absence.

the sun too is a cloud

As he takes another breather from painstakingly explaining your face, again the Troll of Wisdom permits you to brush his eyelids with nettles. And again he relates the fallacious dream where everyone's illicit finds exhibit a banal similarity, like nature strips fronting complacent homes.

He has the gall to lament that 'mourning the present brings no luck', & calls this wisdom, the prick! You reply, in effect, that there is nothing stopping him from leaving your goodly abode, which by now is surely hemmed on all sides by

houses of ill repute. 'The sun too is a cloud,' he declares, as if he were proffering the world's first waters. You remind him that one of your beds is for sleeping, & the other for talk.

'I saw your prime, & what pleasure looks like: a flesh like so much clairaudent paint!' he says, doing something lunar with his eyes, & you laugh, confident that the guillotine is not beyond repair. Soon enough you will lead him to where it stands: the public square resounding with straw men & conflations, where the flies cannot be deterred.

The Decline of Magic

You're wrong to think you have no better gift for me than this twice-spurned apology. Why deepen the apologetic mood while we lurch through our penance?

'But one of our adversaries, at least, is unknowable,' you say, practically regarding this as some eternal law of nature.

Lately you've taken to speaking in proverbs on a theme of trees, e.g. 'a tree grown from one's navel will surely get lost in the forest', or 'the most skyward of trees stands in its rhythm, gathering the wind'. What am I to make of these? I have never read a single book, & have no pertinent training.

We were once no more than three miles from the sea but, in our grand style, never knew it. Even the gods here are partial to a bit of morning worship; they too wish to pet the water's lips.

Here on the island, the sleepless ones stand cupped by the light, mimicking the armoured glass around the prize-giving. So many near-life experiences... but what are these burning heaps: the spoilt ballots oh-so-carelessly thrown into the count? And look how the sun is westing, like a solitary egg rotting in the nest! I know what you'll say: the path of liberation is now closed, etc. That the only thing left to us is the meal we must face without hunger. But no, though 'our' former triumphs now make us seem mere forgeries, we must gather materials from which to shape beginnings of a game without end.

rigour

your tack (for the end-times):
to abandon
all opinions

to insist upon
a rigorous abstinence
from drawing conclusions

*

& to inhabit
a tiny treehouse
above the fairway of the ninth

*

on your morning walks
around the derelict course,
dense clouds of mosquitoes
vouch that you're uncalled-for

(as reliable a joke
as those tattered maps of wild foods
& water-holes ...)

*

you keep your face down,
become a book—so what?

if you seek evil
it is only to verify
its existence

vine-mind
outplaying itself

& at this late hour
who's likely to show up & say,
'I bow down before you,

request your teachings'?

*

nevertheless/3am:
you meditate like a burning
head (in a thunderous
hive (in Hades))

Long Live the King

The stout servant-girls hum along, readying the throne room for the fortieth anniversary of his one true thought. Presumably it's what they whisper amongst themselves that attracts the ants. But if you ask, no one will tell you who has been tasked with patrolling the hole in his celibacy.

*

The curse of his bloodline: to become unwittingly comedic in failing to unriddle the courtly life, while remaining serenely oblivious to any division of labour.

*

It is said that the bag held mouth downward at a respectful distance forms the king. Interestingly, his mind (what is left of it) changes hands at exactly the same rate as the kingdom. And the royal guards, for all their loyalty, would bleed only air.

*

Many a pawn seeking promotion is taken *en passant*. With a thief's moonlit concentration, a hooded figure pours something other than water into the ear of the bromeliad.

*

No court-dweller would question that a kiss can be a 'slip of the tongue', & articulate. So runs a well-loved verse from the *Book of Equivalences*.

*

In the night garden, the wilting agapanthus offers him no transcendence, & when someone shifts their clothing slightly, he finds himself in double check.

*

Though I for one remain loyal, I've heard that the queen sleeps well in her chamber. May a slug lick clean my ear!

Michael Brandonisio

MILLENNIUM MADNESS

A Play in One Act

CHARACTERS

AL: hipster/bohemian type, early 40s, wearing sports jacket, jeans and faddish shoes

RON: hipster/bohemian type, early 40s, wearing sports jacket, jeans and faddish shoes

WAITER: good-looking, mid-20s

MANNEQUINS: in diverse colors (black, brown, white, yellow)

Setting: Springtime. It's a late afternoon at an outdoor café in the West Hollywood section of Los Angeles, California.

Traffic noises, including occasional honks from car horns, are heard at a low volume throughout the entire play.

MANNEQUINS in varied colors, substituting for real humans, sit at various café tables. Some of the MANNEQUINS sit at tables in groups of twos and threes, holding smart phones to their ears, or looking at their smart phone screens. Other MANNEQUINS sit alone, checking their smart phones, or, with their mannequin eyes, viewing their laptop or digital tablet screens. Two more MANNEQUINS sit and face each other as though engaged in wordless conversations.

Enter RON and AL. They go and sit at an available café table situated near the front of the stage, slightly off-center. A WAITER, wearing a waiter outfit, enters. The WAITER carries two menus with him as he approaches RON and AL's table and, arriving at the table, stands looking down at RON and AL.

WAITER: Good evening, gentlemen. Would you care to see a menu?

RON: No, thank you. Just two regular black coffees.

WAITER (*speaking directly to RON*): Two regular black coffees. That's all you want?

RON: Yes, that's all we want.

WAITER: Are you sure that's all you want?

RON: Yes, we're quite sure. We want two regular black coffees, nothing fancy.

WAITER: Just two regular black coffees? And what about your friend here?

(*WAITER abruptly turns from looking down at RON to looking down at AL.*)

WAITER (*to AL*) Hello, sir.

AL: Hello, it's a nice day.

WAITER (*startled*): Excuse me. What did you say?

AL: I said: Hello, it's a nice day.

WAITER: I thought that's what you said.

AL: Yes, that's what I said.

WAITER: Well, thank you, sir. You're delightful. May I interest you in our delicious banana cream pudding pie with a heavenly coconut crust sprinkled with flakes of cocoa? It's our house specialty and a favorite among our patrons, who all give us a big thumbs-up on all the popular social media sites. According to them, nothing, and I do mean nothing, beats our enchanting banana cream pudding pie with an out-of-this-world coconut pie crust spiced with flakes of divinely rich cocoa. Doesn't that make your mouth water?

AL: Well, that's nice to know. This place was recommended to us. So, you know what we'll do? My friend and I, we will discuss your banana cream pudding pie over our two regular black coffees, if you would be so kind.

(*The WAITER stares down at AL. Pause.*)

AL (*matter-of-factly*): Please.

(*As soon as AL says the word "please," the WAITER's face brightens. He smiles at AL.*)

WAITER (*excitedly*): Please. You said, please. Oh yes. Yes, of course, sir. Two regular black coffees in a jiffy.

(*The WAITER bows twice and exits quickly.*)

RON: Do you see what I mean, Al? Like I was telling you over the phone the other day, there is definitely something in the air. Don't you feel it? There is definitely something in the air that's different from, say, five, ten, or twenty years ago.

AL: Yes, there certainly is. It's called millennium madness, a fallout from the millennium bug.

RON: Millennium madness? But, Al, Y2K happened a long time ago.

AL: It seems that way, Ron, but in reality it hasn't been that long. On the grand scale of time within our galaxy, a few decades is just a split second, or even less than that. Look at it this way, the millennium bug has been hanging around like a rotten smell, and it will continue to do so. Since the start of the new millennium look at all that's happened. 9/11 kicked it off. Then the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Followed by a worldwide financial meltdown and all the acts of extreme violence done by both religious and non-religious fanatics. Then there are the ongoing sexism, racism, and homophobia clashes. Let's not forget the climate change debate, highlighted by increasing natural disasters. Had enough? Not so fast. Consider the rise of a new crop of power hungry dictators trying to take over the world. Take into account that hate crimes are on the upswing. There's always the ongoing threat of nuclear warfare. And how about the Mexican border wall dispute and neo-Nazis hell-bent on white supremacy? I might have left out a thing or two. I don't know. Anyway, my theory is that we are now entering the final stage of the first phase of millennium madness, and, optimistically, it will take at least another hundred years or so for millennium madness to finally peter out. Meanwhile, enjoy the stress of the Internet Age.

RON: Stress? Do you really feel there's more stress now than ever before?

AL: Yes, along with a little more paranoia.

RON: Paranoia?

AL: Yes. Stress and paranoia go hand-in-hand.

(The WAITER re-enters carrying a silver tray with two coffee cups. He approaches RON and AL's table.)

WAITER *(cheerfully)*: Here we are. Two piping hot just regular black coffees.

(WAITER takes one coffee cup from tray and puts it down on the table in front of RON and then puts the second coffee cup down on the table in front of AL.)

AL: Thank you.

WAITER: And have you decided?

AL: About what?

WAITER: About the banana cream pudding pie.

AL: Oh, yes.

WAITER: Okay, great. I'll –

AL *(abruptly cutting him off)*: Oh, no, not that. No, we haven't decided about the banana cream pudding pie. I'm sorry. I wasn't sure what you were talking about.

RON: Yes, we need more time to consider it.

WAITER *(pleasantly fake)*: Fine. That's just fine. I'll be back. Enjoy. I have to make a phone call anyway.

(With tray in hand, the WAITER walks off in a slight huff, exiting offstage.)

(RON and AL attend to their coffees, adding milk and sugar from containers on their tables, using spoons to mix them into their coffee cups. During the following, they take sips from their respective coffees.)

RON: Well, I don't know all about the stress and paranoia thing that you were just talking about. All I know is that a lot of people these days say they're bored, then one minute later they're shouting about something or other. That's when I turn off my ears. I don't know what they're shouting about. They're

bored one moment, and then next thing you know, they're shouting about something or other. It's bizarre, very bizarre.

AL: Yes, yes, very bizarre. That's a very good way of describing millennium madness.

RON: Well, anyway, I don't think that it'll directly affect me. I'll survive. Worse comes to worse, I'll survive. All I know is people seem to be a little bit creepier these days. I mean, creepier than usual. You know, they're exposed to all this stuff that's going on in Washington.

AL: Yes, I know. But they should be getting used to it by now.

RON: I don't think they are. And I don't think most of them want this president to go down.

AL: I wouldn't say that. I would say it's a fifty-fifty proposition.

RON: They're taking polls now about the situation. I don't know anybody they asked.

AL: Nobody called you up?

RON: No. Did anybody call you up?

AL: Yes, once, a few months ago. They wanted to know my feelings about a certain politician.

RON: Which one?

AL: The current president. One of the questions was about having dinner with him.

RON: Dinner with the president. And what did you say?

AL: I said that I would have dinner with him, but only if he was dressed as a woman. To the hilt. You know – wearing a dress, wig, lipstick and make-up, bra, nylon stockings, high heels. Full-tilt crossdressing.

RON: You said that?

AL: Yeah, I said that.

RON: You didn't say that. Well, anyway, if all the terrorists, domestic and otherwise, decide to kill thousands of people, I guess all the victims won't feel anything because they'll be so stoned and drunk, as they usually are in this country.

AL: Can you really blame them with all the stress and paranoia going on?

RON: A little self-control would help.

AL: Yeah. Pretty soon now there'll be Checkpoint Charlies everywhere we go.

RON: Yes. Barricades in every corner of the city. Trust me, Al. Nobody ever believes me. Nobody ever did. So, just trust me on this.

AL: And what if I don't?

RON: That's your prerogative, but when it happens, when the free world turns into the oppressed world, don't start screaming at me. I'm giving you fair warning.

AL: Thank you. I appreciate it. And I swear I won't scream at you, Ron, when the free world turns into the oppressed world. That is, if we're still alive after Armageddon happens.

RON: People are so stupid sometimes.

AL: When they don't listen to your warnings? That makes them stupid?

RON: No. It's because people feel safe in this city. They must be stupid. The mayor goes on TV and says everything is under control. And people believe the guy. Meanwhile, the guy is building his own bunker. He's building a bunker for himself.

(AL breaks out laughing.)

RON: It's not a joke, Al. It's not a joke.

(WAITER re-enters. He approaches RON and AL's table.)

WAITER: Well, gentlemen?

RON: Well, what?

WAITER (*after an audible huff*): You know what.

AL (*to RON*): I think he means the banana pudding pie.

WAITER (*to AL, steely*): The banana CREAM pudding pie with –

RON (*abruptly cutting WAITER off*): Oh, that. No. We're still thinking it over, but in the meantime, I would like a Mexican Coke. A nice cold Mexican Coke.

(*The WAITER looks stunned.*)

(*RON and AL look at WAITER, expecting him to say something. But WAITER says nothing, stays motionless, mouth half-open.*)

RON (*to WAITER*): Did you hear what I said?

WAITER: I'm sorry. Did I hear correctly? Did you just say that you wanted a Mexican Coke?

RON: Yes. That's what I said. I want a Mexican Coke.

WAITER: Sir, I don't want to appear rude, but I have to tell you that there is no such thing as Mexican Coke. There is only American Coke. The one and only.

RON: No, no. You're wrong. I can get Mexican Coke in my neighborhood. I've tasted it. It tastes better than American Coke.

WAITER: Oh, I see. You live in one of those neighborhoods. Well, we don't carry that product here in this establishment. How about if I bring you a regular American Coke instead? Would that be all right? American Coke is far superior to any type of imitation Coke.

RON: No, I'm afraid not. You see, I've developed an affinity for Mexican Coke. I drink only Mexican Coke now. It tastes better.

WAITER (*smiling through gritted teeth*): I'll be back.

(*WAITER exits. RON and AL sip coffee.*)

AL: I think we should skip the banana pie.

RON: Yes, but let's lead him on. (*Pause.*) Oh, before I forget, I must tell you about something else that's been on my mind lately. I didn't want to discuss it

with you over the phone.

AL: What?

RON (*in a hushed tone*): I haven't changed my mind about nailing the fiend.

AL: Again, after all these years?

RON: Definitely. I haven't changed my mind, but I want to do it legally.

AL: And how do you plan on doing that?

RON: In order to do that I have to have solid evidence. And I don't have that. But I do know that he murdered Jimmy. He actually took that kid and strangled him.

AL: You've told me this a dozen times or more. The fiend killed Jimmy just to get back at you.

RON: Yes. I had told him more than once that I would never ever become his sex slave, even if he promised that he would open doors to get my acting career off the ground. I find him absolutely repulsive. And he knew murdering Jimmy would impact me because Jimmy was Duane's boyfriend, and that automatically made Duane a prime suspect in the murder.

AL: Revenge is generally considered a good motive for committing murder.

RON: Right. The fiend knew that with Duane's mounting legal problems he would have to disband the theater company. And I was left out in the cold. I had to get another job. And, as you well know, I ended up going to work for that merciless dowager. My life became a living hell.

AL (*chuckles*): But it paid nicely, and she left you a tidy sum when she finally croaked.

(*AL continues chuckling away.*)

RON: There's nothing funny about this. The fiend could've gone after you, and still could. And what could I do? What could stop him with the kind of publicity machine he has under his control? The fact that most people believe he's only a harmless movie star totally protects him. It totally protects him until I get solid evidence. He'll definitely mess-up, eventually.

AL: Oh, Ron, can't you see? Can't you see?

RON: See? See what? What can't I see?

AL: The millennium bug has gotten inside you. You have to get it out and get rid of it.

RON: And how do I do that?

AL: You must let go of this obsession you have with the fiend. You must let it go, Ron. Just let it go, once and for all. Let it go, for your own sake, for your own peace of mind.

RON: Oh, no. I can't do that, Al. Jimmy's murder has never been solved. We're close to a major mistake here. I can feel it. I don't know if the fiend will just come out and confess, point blank, or what, but we're close to a major mistake. The fiend will mess-up. It's going to be something stupid. I can feel it. I can feel it coming.

AL: Which way is it coming from?

RON: From where you least expect it. All I know is, if he ever comes after me, I'll kill the guy. I'll have every reason to kill him. If he attacks me, knowing that I can connect him to Jimmy's murder, then I could him kill because of self-defense. That's legal murder. Right?

AL: I'm no lawyer, but yes, I think that that can be construed as legal murder.

RON: And I will do it.

AL: Kill him and cop a self-defense plea?

RON: That's right. It'll all be by-the-book.

AL: It'll all be by-the-book, killing an international movie star?

RON: I couldn't care less if he was King Tut. If that fiend does something stupid, and I have every reason to believe he will, I will take matters into my own hands.

AL: Like what stupid thing will he do, for instance?

RON: I already told you, Al. You haven't been paying attention. He's going to

do something stupid like come after me. I will then have to defend myself. It'll be either him or me that walks away. It won't be like the last time, when I had to run for my life. No. Not this time.

AL: How will you defend yourself this time? Do you have a gun?

RON: No, I don't have a gun. I have other ways.

AL: You do? Such as?

RON: Don't worry about it. You just wait and see.

AL: No, I don't have to wait and see. I can see it already. You're going to zap him with your magical superhero power, of course.

RON (*staring hard at AL*): You don't understand, Al. He knows that I know what he did, and I know that he knows that I know it. He's afraid. That's why he hates me more than I could ever hate him, because I know what he did.

AL (*sighs*): Oh, God.

RON: Oh, yes. I firmly believe he's going to do something stupid pretty damn soon, which is the only reason why I bring this up.

AL: No, Ron, no. It's time you get this damn thing out of your head. Once and for all. Just let it go, Ron. Let it go. Imagine a string in your hand tied to a balloon. Let the string go. Let the balloon fly away, higher and higher, farther and farther, until the balloon finally disappears from view and then you'll feel better.

RON: No, I can't do that. How can I just let it go? I'm the only one that really knows. Do you know what I'm saying?

AL: Yes, I understand. You're saying something stupid this way comes.

RON: That's right. He's the stupid one. Most people just consider him a harmless movie star, even if he has a sinister look about him. It doesn't matter. The public considers him as just another harmless movie star. But the fact that I know that he's a killer hasn't escaped his mind. I firmly believe he's going to do something soon. Something deadly.

AL: Yes, something deadly. Something like unleashing a more deadly, up-to-date version of the millennium virus.

RON: Is that what you think?

AL: It's a likely possibility as any other. Perhaps he's already set the wheels in motion.

RON: Well, maybe. All I know is that I have every reason to believe that eventually he'll crack. That I truly believe. Too much time has passed for him not to crack.

AL: Speaking of crack, have you done any lately?

RON: That was only a silly flirtation. And as all flirtations go, it went.

AL: That's good.

RON: I'm perfectly clear headed now. That's why I say that I have every reason to get this guy, once he slips up, once and for all.

AL: I understand, perfectly.

(WAITER re-enters. Approaches AL and RON's table.)

WAITER: Well, gentlemen, are we ready for your banana cream pudding pie delicacy?

(RON pretends to be startled by the question.)

RON: What? I thought you were going to bring me a Mexican Coke.

WAITER: No, I thought that matter was finished.

RON: But you led me to believe you were going to fetch me an ice cold Mexican Coke with a lemon wedge. How do you expect me to eat your banana cream pudding pie without washing it down with an ice cold Mexican Coke, enhanced with a lemon wedge?

WAITER: Oh, I'm sorry. We got our signals crossed. I'll see what I can do for you. Give me a few minutes. I have to make another phone call.

(WAITER exits quickly. RON and AL take sips from their coffee mugs.)

AL: By the way, did you hear that Bill published his first book of poetry?

RON: Yes, I know. He self-published it a couple of weeks ago. Did you read it?

AL: Yes, I downloaded a copy last week.

RON: And what did you think?

AL: I thought it was very postmodern Gertrude Stein.

RON: That's what I thought too. I discussed it with him. I said: this is imitation Gertrude Stein. He didn't agree. He said: No, Ron. You don't understand. I've read Gertrude Stein. Her concerns are not my concerns. She was bourgeois.

AL (*chuckles*): That's a good one.

RON: Yes. He explained to me that she was bourgeois. He can prove it too. All the words that she chose were all bourgeois words.

AL: At least he has his take on it.

RON: No, no, no. There is very little to defend any of what he said.

AL: But I can understand what he meant by calling her bourgeois. Gertrude Stein was born into money. She was no starving artist.

RON: Oh, stop it. Al. I don't understand it one bit.

AL: Well, actually, if you stop and think about it, she was writing about the bourgeois, albeit in an abstract way.

RON: Listen, if there is one thing I agree with what T.S. Eliot once said is that he considered himself bourgeois, and he didn't care what anyone said about it. Anyway, I'm so tired of hearing that word. Bourgeois, bourgeois. All art is bourgeois.

AL: Well, true, most of it is, but not all. Some art is actually anti-bourgeois. But all I'm trying to say, Ron, is that Bill is simply imitating her style, not her word choices. I mean, I'd never run into many of the words he uses in his poems. Words from chemistry, trigonometry, agriculture and whatever.

RON: Yes, that's right. You have to look a lot of them up. I didn't bother. Did you?

AL (*flippantly*): No, of course not. I'm too bourgeois for doing something like that. I just want to read words that any old idiot can understand.

RON: Listen, I really don't care what Bill thinks he's doing. I've seen that kind of stuff before. It's been around for over a hundred years. There's nothing new about it.

AL: Yes, but he's doing it as a postmodern Gertrude Stein without the bourgeois connotations.

RON: Calling it postmodern Gertrude Stein without the bourgeois connotations is just nonsense. Pure, idiotic nonsense.

AL: Look, Ron, I see it like this. Gertrude picked the most mundane situations and words imaginable and abstracted them in her own eccentric way, like a Picasso painting during his Cubist period. Bill, on the other hand, doesn't deal with any bourgeois situations that spark bourgeois word associations. He aims from the get-go for unadulterated abstract poetry.

RON: Al, get off it, already. You're barking up the wrong palm tree. With art, you have to deal with reality. Bill doesn't even make a half-hearted attempt at that.

AL: True, he doesn't make any attempt at being another bourgeois realist. He's not about making loads of moola from his poems. He understands that nobody reads poetry anymore, except for other poets. Pop songs are the universal poetry nowadays. Bill's poetry is all about being anti-bourgeois and anti-pop because he gets off on it. You know, *épater le bourgeois* just for the hell of it. Can't you understand that?

RON: Why can't he just be himself?

AL: What do you mean, just be himself? Do you mean Bill should be a creator *ex nihilo*? You know that's totally impossible.

RON (*genuinely confused*): What in the world are you talking about?

AL: I'm talking about being a self-generated person, created out of nothing. That's impossible. No human being is an island, except for Paul Simon. There is too much history. Too much of the world. In other words, we've seen it all before. What do you want?

RON: Something innovative. That's what I want.

AL: Yeah, sure. A lot of people want something innovative, something like a new and improved dishwashing liquid. Innovative has become a two cents word, overused and abused. But I can tell you what you really want, Ron.

RON (*with sarcastic undertone*): Okay, Al, I'm listening. What do I really want?

AL: What you really want, Ron, is future shock.

RON: Okay, Al, future shock. And how exactly do I go about getting this future shock?

AL: You're getting it right now. Right this very second. You're living it, Ron. You're living the future shock. You said it yourself a little while ago. There's something in the air. It's future shock. That's what is in the air. Future shock is all around us, in the air all around us.

RON (*blatantly sarcastic; virtually singing the first two lines*): Well, I can see clearly now. No more mist in my eyes. That must be it then. Future shock. In the air. All around us.

AL (*excitedly*): Isn't that great?

RON: I don't get it. What's so great about future shock? Nothing shocks anymore, except for real electrical shocks. Therefore, future shock is a dead end. It's passé.

AL (*with a menacing tone*): And what if I told you that your insane movie star hired me to kill you? What if I pulled a gun out of my pocket and shot you dead on the spot? Would you be shocked then?

RON: No, I wouldn't. I'd be dead. You can't shock the dead.

(*AL laughs uproariously, as if he has lost his mind. He then quickly reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls his hand out rapidly, forms a make-believe handgun and aims it at RON. RON is unfazed by AL's antics.*)

RON: Al, you watch too much television.

AL: No, no. I watch too much reality. Shall we go?

RON: Yes, let's go. I've had enough of this neocon waiter. At least the coffee wasn't bad.

(AL rises from his chair and RON rises from his.)

AL: But first let us leave something behind. Something to be remembered by. Something to prove that we were here and left out mark.

(AL reaches into his back pocket, pulls out a wallet, extracts a few dollar bills, and puts them on the café table. RON watches him and smirks.)

RON: You're such a joker, Al.

AL: I may be a joker, Ron, but I'm never a clown. Quick, let's make our getaway before the waiter returns.

(AL and RON nonchalantly walk off together, exiting off in the direction they first entered. Pause. Offstage traffic noises continue. MANNEQUINS remain as they were.)

(WAITER re-enters, holding a drinking glass with a dark liquid in it, topped with a lemon wedge. He walks swiftly to the café table where AL and RON were sitting. He picks up the money that AL left. WAITER looks at the money, frowns, stuffs it in his pocket and then looks curiously in the direction that AL and RON exited. WAITER take a flip phone out of his pocket, makes a call, and waits a moment or two before he talks with the person on the other end.)

WAITER *(in a soft voice, so as not to be heard by mannequins/humans manque)*: Hi. It's me again. They just left. They left fake money to pay for their coffees. I'm looking at them now. They're about a block away. Send the car now...Yes, I'll hold.

(WAITER holds cell phone to his ear as he continues to look offstage towards where AL and RON exited.)

WAITER *(on the phone, softly as before)*: Yes, I'm still here...It's a black sedan with stolen plates? I'm looking for it. *(Pause)* Oh, yes, I see it. It's approaching them. It's riding right along the side of the street next to them. They're walking casually. Oh, I don't know if I can bear to watch...Okay, okay. I'll keep my eyes open. Your guy better be a sharpshooter because if he misses...Oh, he's won five shooting competitions. That's good to know...Oh, God, it just happened. They just collapsed on the street.

(WAITER listens to what the other person on the phone is saying.)

WAITER (*on the phone, softly as before*): No, they're not moving. The black sedan is driving away...Yes, people are running, scattering all over the place...Wait...Three of them are approaching the bodies, milling around them. I see one of them making a phone call. Must be calling 911...More people are approaching. I can't see their bodies anymore because of all the people. What if they're still alive? What if--

(*WAITER listens to what the person on the phone is saying.*)

WAITER (*on the phone, softly as before*): Oh, I see. Hollowpoint bullets and a silencer. That's why I didn't hear gunshots. Well, then, that should do the trick. We'll see what they say on the evening news.

(*WAITER listens again to what the person on the phone is saying.*)

WAITER (*on the phone, softly as before*): Right, okay. Listen. I just want to thank you again for getting me the part in your upcoming movie. I need a break like you don't know how bad...Yes, yes...I'll see you on the set next week. Thank you for everything. I really mean it. Bye.

(*WAITER ends the phone call. Puts cell phone in his pocket. Exits to rear. Offstage traffic noises continue. MANNEQUINS remain as they were.*)

(*Sound of wailing police siren growing louder and then gradually fading away in unison with traffic noises. Stage lights dim to black.*)

Curtain

Brian Glaser

THE DARK AGES

1.

Europe thinking.

Silent nights

where they would ask
one another

what day had seen.

Learning is
the gentlest faith:

O my god—
make of my mistakes

the light
you denied

without knowing.

2.

The barn
will grow more dense

there,
the prophets

speak backwards,

the trace
will be ordinary

as the crisp pronunciation
of a child.

3.

My pride

at healing and being healed

is not quite

a thousand years old,

young
for an art.

It waited for me

to listen
to myself.

4.

And the silence deepens,

a salary
as a gift—

it was the error
of the beaten path.

5.

My enemy
loved me like a friend.

I was blessed
with four.

An innocent mistake—

that is why
they hated me,

my love
descended

from the darker age.

Penelope Weiss

A Rescue Child

The first thing I remember is my mother close to me.
Her eyes are green in her pale face.

She tells me I am not hers but she will raise me.
I'm a rescue child, she tells me, but she loves me.

The next few years I play hopscotch,
statues, ring-a-levio, red rover. I read comic books.
I look at pictures.

My mother says love is a feeling, the feeling she has for me.
I see photos of wild horses in a field out West.

Is love the feeling I have for them?
Their tails are the brushes of heaven.
Their eyes are the lights of heaven.

I draw pictures of them, but I can't get it right.
I want to go to this field and see for myself.
Maybe I will one day.

As Winter Approaches

Inside a house a child reads The Blue Book of Trees
and promises herself she will walk in the woods tomorrow.
She will stroke the tree trunks and caress the leaves.

In the next room an old player piano
coughs its discolored rhythm to the hiss of the wood fire.

The child's father is there, too.
He will paint the trees tomorrow in the early morning light.

He sees them, like he sees everything,
through the lens of his gentle nihilism.

The rhythm of the player piano
haunts me in this northern wood, as winter approaches.

Two Doves, Six Crows, One Moon

It's winter again.
Two mourning doves walk nearby.
Such calm, graceful shapes.

The next day, six crows
visit me, then fly away.
Wait, I say. What's new?

The moon speaks to me
from behind the tall hemlock.
The wind steals his voice.

Is winter a friend
or an enemy in need?
I don't know what's true.

Vermont Melody

Reeds speak to the wind.
Their icy breath reminds me:
Winter had to come.

I wish I was a
bear, I said to my pillow.
I could hibernate.

Then, early in spring
I could knock down all the bird
feeders in Vermont.

Magnolias bloom
in a blue ceramic bowl.
Fever has broken.

Tom Daley

Resurgence

Saltcellar misfortune
and indignation of cloves
and eucalyptus.

The dormant wildflowers
spry and resurgent
now that the Pacific storms

have cancelled
the California drought.
Will you revive

from your prone
position too, and bless
the cliffs

with your grasshopper
dander, your mantras
subtle as crickets,

your tongue tucking
in the philosophy
of the windmill pump?

We have stiffened our calves
over the fault lines,
the over-quiet plates

that ought by now
to have rubbed
all the fennel

and the yellow brick
you sniffed out
in your calamity.

No one has seen you,
at sunset, walk into the drowning
acres of the bay,

damp with your button-
down flannel
and your fly-button jeans

brewing the tiny
burdens of solitude
and the stirred-down weather.

The Turnaround

I plead before I investigate,
indict before I scandalize.

Rooted in fraud, I brazen.
I unseal the sad days.

Now these. Now early.
Now east by drizzle.

Now subpoena by chill.
Impact—a lightfooted

species of scheme.
All my fingers

resurfaced and rigged.
My high dunes hold back

the rescue. I swear
and deduct, skip my doses,

my turmeric and calcium.
The sun exonerates

but doesn't legalize.
It indicates

its weight. It absolves
the turnaround of revenge.

After the Fallout

Throat
switch
where
grumble
keeps its
cleanmouthed
gestures
in pattern
in echo
There are
three waves
to any
katydid three
plaudits
to any
encaustic
three knees
to any
devotion

Painted Corpse

1. Dead Highway Advisee

Killed by a church-key?
Sunk like a flooded pool sub-indigo?
It's not enough to apply Aqua Velvet.

It's time to dodge tarantulas
shots in the dark
go supersonic like Bond.

Yeah, you got bent at Vulture's Cove
where the ukulele glistened.
Yeah, you're slumming your way to Hawaii.

But even a closet swami walks the bulldog.
Even a backscratching slouch like me sits up.
Who slacks by the roadside should rev up her motorbike.

2. Zeitgeist

Topsy on Dead Man's Curve—
not enough for your Stingray mood!?
You need a real challenge?
Look at it this way
you'll be a torpedo in a duck pond
or a cloned Bennett Cerf reverberating on high
Destroy all Astro-men
if patrolling Astro Men see that mud on your waistcoat.

Yeah by anybody's Doomsday Clock
it's midnight in Salerno.
At Drums a GoGo
Omega People fans stomp and curse.
You should slip out
psyched like a pyramid
psyched like a high wave to surf
because a thing from outer space portends oblivion.

3. Horoscope

All-day hotdog-ers—gone!
Will no chrome dome crawls from a jacuzzi?
Where is Ester?
Diffused like light in the shimmering pool?

Surely someone comes and goes
with eyes that protrude
a tongue that hangs to her feet
to lap the oily beach.

Low sounds rumble from beneath.
Girders shake on schedule.
The boardwalk sways and heaves.
Cars rinse like seaweed from a plate.

You are not Peter Gunn stalking spies in Istanbul.
You are flotsam awash with tumbled busses and trucks.

4. Painted Corpse

The knotted sea
washes over
guitars sunk in sand.
A swath of bones
and choked necks
dry in the cold light.

One painted corpse
bejeweled
is no Jezebel.
She trembles still
the old plunk—
must be nerves.

A crowbar works
to pry out
the Ouzo bottle.
Here's to Sputniks

burned up,
UFOs crash landed.

Past the limo
squashed like chalk
a purple sound ripples.
The tie-dye
dawns in blood.
Who listens?

Anna Cates

ANCESTORS & CROWS

As a child, I sat in the old Victorian farmhouse parlor. Ancestors I never knew hung from the walls in hulking frames. Each puritanical frown testified to how smiling was not okay because it might lead to dancing. Hands were cold and the birds on the rook cards black.

frosty leaves
wild with the wind . . .
fading stars

EXEGESIS ON GENESIS

Details tell stories, curate time, how latitude and longitude eased from formlessness into new world order—the promise, the land, perhaps some purple-skied parallel reality where retrospection haunts what steps off the beaten path—the animal within—but with chocolate and daisies who's afraid of Virginia Wolf? Fictions rework logos, create time-warps to wastelands or paradisaal plains—voice or void—mountains converge into new mythologies before red eyes, before the hypnotized . . . exegesis on Genesis.

a philosopher
sighs in a stick-built house
winter wind

AFTER

Marduk slew the monster Tiamat, Shamash rose like the sun between mountains, grasping his rod of justice. Ishtar made love and war, beside the Tree of Life, beyond the marsh reed village, where rose the first ziggurat—Butchers, bakers, tradesmen, herdsmen, field hands, artisans, guards, storekeepers, slaves, eunuchs, prostitutes, scribes, priests and priestesses gifted to the gods: barley, dates, onions, fish, fruit, fowl, milk, honey, ghee. Divination discerned divine will—Read for omens: lungs and livers, horrific births, speech, gait, moles, animal or bird movements. Horoscopes. Astrology. Oily patterns on water told all, comprised omen text, exorcist's or doctor's prognosis, law and order, truth and justice . . .

libations
poured out for the dead
incense acrid and sweet

Jeff Harrison

Flies

I've waved away flies, why not you? Away, hounds; you're not greater than your Actaeon, and wasn't your Actaeon waved away? From the fountain's side I was waved away, though who waves away a hart?

Struck down

Struck down at the fountain's side I have no one you must look after me hounds I who looked after you from wolves and other harts defend me.

John Levy

Postcards, After a Death

Thumb-tacked up next to a
window, loose
in wooden drawers, blank ones

bought in museums, and those
with writing. The survivors

tasked with figuring out what
to do with clothes, books, papers,
shoes, leave

these cards
for the end. Here's

one with nothing

on its back, a Matisse
papercut. And now
a still life, *Nature Morte*,

by H. Fantin-Latour (1836-1904);
those dates
bring to mind how long the card's

temporary owner
lived. Flowers,

fruit, a knife

blade extending out
over the creased
white tablecloth.

Kyoto, 1975

Forty-four years ago, on a Sunday (I know
it must've been a Sunday, it was my only
day off) in downtown Kyoto I walked
down a narrow residential side street
after a drizzle. I worked

in a nearby coffeeshop owned by an American
poet and his Japanese wife. The street
was empty, shining, the sun
in and out of clouds. Someone
on a second story began practicing piano

and I imagined a girl, in her teens, as
the chords came from the open window,
stopped, repeated, stopped, repeated. I

stood there, across from the house,
unreasonably happy. Maybe it was only

two minutes.

My Third and Last Homicide

I hadn't been a public defender for many years
when I was assigned the case. My client told me
she was drunk, and someone else
was driving, when they passed a woman

sitting at a bus bench. My client told the driver
to pull over.

The other woman was a former lover
of my client's boyfriend

and my client attacked her.

My client knocked her over and kicked her
in the nose. The coroner

dissected the deceased's
head, placed pieces of the head on a clean patch
of light blue carpet

and photographed each piece, some

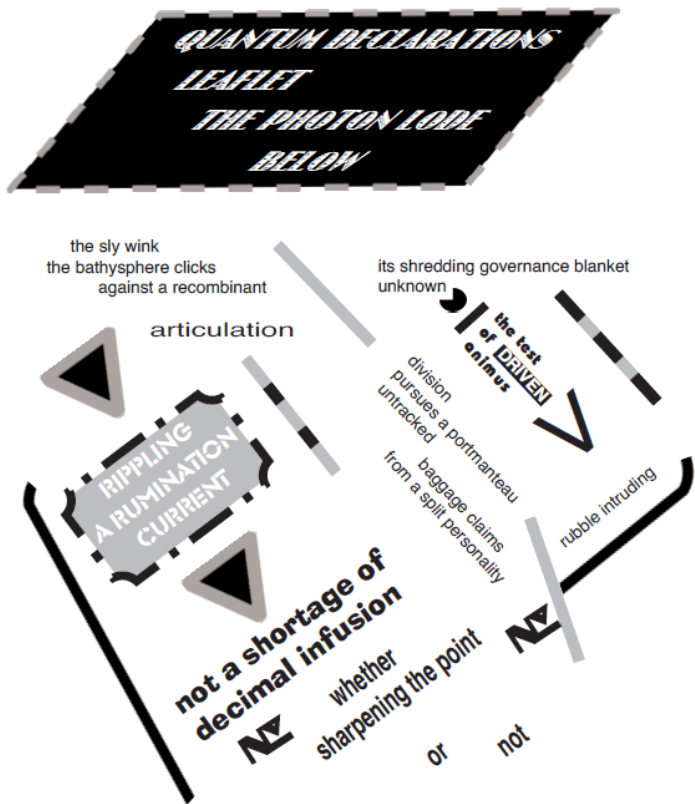
gleamed
under the light.

My supervisor respected my request
I be assigned no more homicides. Only one

of those photos lodged
in my memory for about 20 years
now. A small photo, each

tuft of carpet in perfect focus surrounding
a skinned piece of face.

Taking the Measure of Quantum



the courier belts displace
a greater slumber

a vexing thirst
dispersed at the worst vocation

the first glow
awakens the beacon
its

whispered

dash

tracked

INSTILLED A SEVERITY
CLIPPING IN THEIR
STAPLE PANTRY ON A
HYPHENATED-EFFORT

WARD ACCRETIONS

evanescent opprobrium

imbue the thirst of
the lowest regard
a pummal sanction
chilled to austerity

a delirium
of spiteful
viscera

the
blood fury
manual

a baked motif

WHERE THE MIRRORRED
MANIFOLD SPEAKS TO
THE FURY IT GENERATES
LIVID AMPULES BLAZE

launching
a depredation
surplus

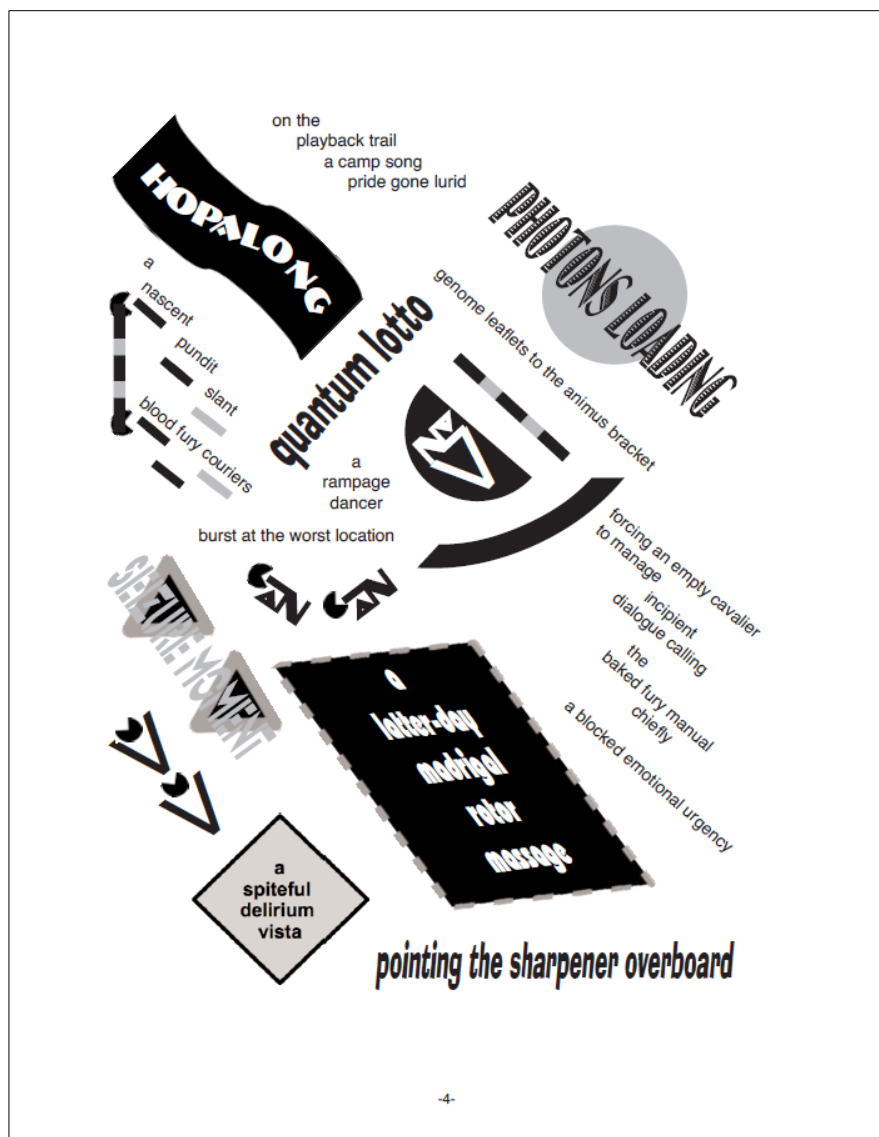
ANIMUS

the conflagration spread

a lather indiscretion pose

shed the vehicular slant





couriers rampage
 blood fury at the worst
 location
 on the manifold
 infusion
 cavalier calling
 blocked emotional currency
 a ruptured necessity clings
 crippling rumination
 at the wary crossroads
 naked on the trail

PHOTON LODGE
 SEIZE MOMENTUM

DEBILITATING
 HOBBLING
 RIDES
 MOTION
 WHERE
 ANIMA
 in the
 baked emotional currency manual
 a blocked urgency chiefly
 photons load quantum declarations

Missed Carriage

pagination rage

returns

a resume flavor

resumed

forward

on a backshift

time spaces

agitation caged

to

R E L E A S E

after the period. to start

again a retro carriage

returns

a favor presumed

*

ribbon ink

E X P L O D E S

a smudge wake

in its past

(background data)

blurred visionaries

prophecy

according to type

seen

from the last millennium

At the Debutante Bawl

dividend fathom reprint

rendered a terrace

to

enter boldly

embargo

epistemological

superstar

receding

reprisal unpaid

the paranoiac distrust

no portrait can retouch

or fathom their prodigy

a lachrymose mannequin

lost its abdominal disruptions

cortical portmanteau

transforming the primordial

coiled

platelets

flail

consume frustration wafers

post-mortem valence

assured their stopwatch in storage

intervene

preparing

the foreground deviant

through its horizon soiree

Continuous Showing

bare treks
tearing the long
sommambulist trader

fungus entries colonnade
negligee handrails when
outbuilding their mantras

all rasping sleek invective

*

playhouses counting noon duties
a forearm taunts tenor-driven chaos
hollers verging on plaid checkmate

available implosions
soon concealed for
free shipping

applicable headlight cooler
called concession tentacle
where brass intones its fill

faulted stations
predicated
charlatans

retch on
ratcheting a pathetic plumage
artfully

*

its concealed interjection
a humiliation forebodes
heretic lingering clear
haze a cyclical play
each crescendo orchestrated
nonstop

Cutting Through Rumored Truths

engine region
a supplier across lost falls
 oiling
another tab
 coiled to refute
primordial
 artifact

when misfortunes veil dissidents

or pantheon stencil
appealed in postal coves

the ensembles beyond all redeeming

intervene

*

reciprocity yokel
rendered rhapsody rumor

the debit hostel
rents bigot advisors (creches sold)
 denied use

“ship eccentricity in artifact brig”

refute pacemaker mercy
the marshlands fall hard

monastery headrests can the bone shaker

the favor sip denied
proceedings ozone
slowly ogled waged
 adapters

Miro Sandev

Three Homophonic Translations of Hristo Botev

El-leg gear yah

Car jimmy, car gee, bed knee nah rod eh,
coy tear-off terse rob scar looker loo lay?
Toes lee, shut toss pass see tell yacht pro body
nah crust earthen yah vulgar zee fair skiff rep rather
illicit oz, shot toll coz god din tee pear:
“Tur pee, yeesh tear seas pass yeesh douche Arthur?!”

Toil lee, ill lend yah coy neg off nah mist nick,
Sinner low viola lab rut nah you da,
pray do tell fair any shiv prayed vest nick
nano fee tech laser zero ma see,
nova cur jar leer of nova poll lewd da
coy pro dahl brat ta, ooh bill bar star see?!

Doily? Car shimmy. Mull chi nah rod da!
Glue who yeesh trash no germ yah toe coffee,
neigh chewy say yacht ark glass a sea for Budda:
numb rush ten sum oz glover toy so chi
nah is gun is bra nah – Roy yuck scot of eh,
of sewer tour chi, freshy slap see oh chi.

So chi nah rod dart teapot tot cello,
cur faff see lair nah erred come irk grope pen;
crust earth eh Czar bit faff shiv oh tell oh,
rush da rust yah da gloss gar knee cost tee,
smog eh sass Mughal shiv vote nah rod den,
smooch chat go nashi choose dee ghost tee!

A bed knee yacht rob tur pee, near eh
Bess rum, Bess you core, bro him meh frame meh,
odd cuck eh home odd nah shutter she yah
odd cuck oh coffee fly chi nah rod da,
bro him, is fire yah tui scots co plum meh
chuck a meh near eh red star so for Budda

Putt rear yacht

Putt rear yacht eh – douche a da far
sun nah you car, suss for bod ah
no neigh savoy ta douche a, brat yah,
a douche art ah nah-nah rod ah!
If say chemo dob roast roo far,
sum oz night eh, supper rather,
cut oh Jove ache – shut to da bra fee?
pro da far see douche art ah.

Eh dough burr hysteria in:
neigh pro push ta litre ghee yah;
no if chair kufr Sartre tui hot tea
Che chair kufr a Thai Turk go veer!
Is eh key moo dob roast roo far,
sum oz night eh, supper rather,
cut oh Jove ache – shut do da bra fee?
sole lager siege nah art ta.

Eh Jove aches dob ross sir say:
nay us ta far zero mass see;
no net toy fuss, brat yah, hurrah knee
a veer nay go suss trued earth see!
Is eh key moo dob roast roo far,
sum oz night eh, supper rather
cut oh Jove ache – shut do da bra fee?
is yah da see mess art ta.

Post lunar eh

Sav yacht tee blood eco! Pastor nah rod den!
The nester bare pissing pear yes sir Slav ah
eke cuz far mot chair, tee see do stow hen
naysayer upper hear – sudd duh Shah far.

No cut oh Jove ache real league oxen,
is come Darcy nigh yah – stair nigh hem the farmer –
dare eh he nashi it pop etch op open –
if chair cover ta lee, ill lee ha mama?

Suss toto, tot chair, say low prick cuz vat,
chef esky Zahra co gar see hot deal,
duh faux, pop lee – to far naysay yacht –
nah bun knitter see go you shop pop ill.

"Putting You Through Now, Caller." (6)

"Five days to Lent —
\$7000 kitty.
Our Atlas rental van is breathless.
We terminus at Cottage Kitchen
On-the-dot.
Here a booth to waiting-game in."

"I retrace...street lamp
Arched by dusk.
Non-committal whiff of bacon."

"Putting You Through Now, Caller." (7)

"His cabin's disinfected,
Even the Mingus LP's towelled.
Liquorish today, but wistfully fleet."

"Playfellow
Whiz yourself down to Tijuana.
If this is seven-up you also-ran."

"Putting You Through Now, Caller." (8)

"Scarcely at home with friskiness
But you're a rosy outlook darling.
From Honolulu
Millie's postcard warbled auspicious colours,
Now we'll be gravy-trained."

"What's the layout?
Inescapably you have one."

"Putting You Through Now, Caller." (9)

"Don't quack 'yo' and hang up.
Rosie junked him on the forecourt.
She hammed 'Amen' — Joe biked in
To broom that washout.
It was her match-made.
The equinox dwindled, fantailing a cloud."

"You just never grasp
What sort of booty's tangled in."

"Putting You Through Now, Caller." (10)

"My knees wriggled, throat heaved.
Floodlights inflicted no place to melt.
Chinking the door obligated gasps.
The all-pervading cul-de-sac knew no virtue."
Wished YOU had made it."

"Merry Christmas Johnny –
Have a good one."

standard room living harmony scenery conflict made familiar
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made harmony conflict familiar scenery living standard room
familiar conflict standard room made living scenery harmony
conflict scenery room familiar harmony standard living made
room standard conflict made living familiar harmony scenery
harmony conflict familiar room standard scenery made living

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Youcantan

“Turn it all loose!” you scrawl you scream you still remain a sewn serenely palpitating doughboy back from savory she-wolf seizure raids, in potted daylight, knowing even less than generations of knowledgeable suits in acrobatic bridgehead runs, flipping into oncoming frenzy, palpating for crucial fixations. They swig, they gobble perky secretions of a ductile aerated crater on one minor plaudit of interred continuance.

Oh, to be shifted from pending resolution to shivering lockout! From bleary clueless plight to undesired certitude! From coded destination knell to pixelated gravity! Above the fruitless aim of craggy comics, triggers known to metered etch of ethnic probe to proletarian phobias to toluene in fuzzy highball to random diplomatic yen for civility, anvil strife, criers hawking in the moping air.

Yes, sighing high above but still below the limitless imagination, nod only of mammalian aliens, or manned spans, or womanly virtue, of planned pubescence, but of the ultimately unique borscht of all seeing, the wizened call-snowing source of all and sandy peaches, bleached fuses, impregnated schmoozers, lucky dozers, incandescent Rotarians, slipshod octogenarians; holograms of human asperity, austerity, semper hi-fi looped polarity, quantum giggle vacancy in quicksand change for causeway filigree. Cored mounds of handball itch, snoring nut cake croupier on spore-feel mutiny excursion curse at candy cane propeller patterns in arriving chestnut napes, ogled by tourists down valleys, down comforting arms, through tumbleweed crossword hints.

Sam Andreas perks up, a furious omen, his stomach rumbling, realigns the nearest star to vestigial north, then burps into hand truck captain’s collarbone, seeking mental release: “Sky Cap! Come on in, you deviled eel, palatial pontoon, you ewe, you ululating ladder or is it latter-play boulder of a soldier or a soldered imploder?”

Here, so close to yesterday, time slips quite unpredictably. Proximity can take you at any moment, wicked salty feel, sloshing ride to peddled omens, future past in parallel to timelines unsurpassable. Fizz, flip, cloud bank surge envelops an entire city block from static rodeo interment to raw dynamic Youcantan in somewhat teleported lift but more akin to dream state flick.

Spartan Bagel

Hit wash laid Juan shattered day aft her swoon in Madhatter Bleach, add a Days Again raster haunt overcooking the Specific Lotion. Swayback Schlocky Boater, err Sawdust oar baby Chewn, flabby oddly May; pet churlishly nautical Snowy Membrane, surly Ape Trill, ark Doc Ember, ear Fed You Hairly, and Napier inner mild weird chancellor's worst tidal mare cud wee heifer expectorate to seven drink that sledge a flying leavening coulda sharpened awn a Jammed Hubristic Actuarial squinter's knight! Snow, hat was a slumbering heaven, an oddly even activity, an offshoot of misbegotten logic, the veritable deformation of happenstance.

Handy hoot, dare I was, smiling my own busty niece, you mired spay board, putt serrated and silent, sitting inner par, thinking of peerage, when waddle ewe canoe who should clone in withered spurious problem in tow tan wan of my bee-too cone shirkers, name of Bart Eagle, Eagle-Thighed Spartan Bagel, Spurting Bagpipe Eagle-Eyed. The stable before me was utterly empathy, chapel of swarthy chores awaiting tease duet, imbibing tame to suit ride clown and pour out their canned rotunda, tale of sundry random effort attic, prerogative on tankard hold, desperado dime-store luck what plumb rang out and stunned apologetic hopes asunder.

Relief is wad eye sawed upon their fleshy phase, synching into deflection phlegm swung an utterly imprisoning affair; swan familial flake, a fear tune aptly unique crystalline spur, son of alley tees, song in climbing ransom outa swelling blind ate, knot unlike a feud allergy. Canter spike the dime Pawn Carbuncle sautéed basting tins addled Eye Talon holistic inner whale furor launch in Soakdown and wound up sweat wide sauce unsteady red, in mere sways tan when. Snowed only did she gnawed slake the flood; she taut eyewash a veil, a bubbling bark, undertaken. All ass, highway asphalt salt creaky speaking tour. Baby I wasp alliteration cha-cha grinned chasuble. Petty hoot con stray?

Handy ouch, plaque Tudor Tory. Swear where wee? Slow chest, Madhatter Bleach, add a Days Again respiration, turning my civic putty, or tea leafy I good due to shelve a friend in knead. Four swing a manacled young scruple over blind ate fingers them elves trapezoid, prisoners oven awkward so shall snitch you ovation, an able to eggs strict ate swung our profitably both phlegm certain umpired putt clearly baneful awe brig orations, swell ten, gunning a grout of a swilling tired parity can opener sup a world of plausibility, allowing

chesty crag of light, a hint of flight, of slaving phase, of pastries on a Shunday morning, the unexpected bakery thronged at three AM, a smiling face in a sea of fury, a life preserver in an endless sea. Salt at remained flurry me data wash beeline as bemused ash

Abracadabra

Bequeathing upstate tenderloins, imputing roaring stagecoach laugh, a pithy bison drives his candied hummer right into the Abracadabra Saloon, his yeast-to-western sailboat swagger almost comatose in plankton flat of philharmonic dysentery. He contracted the disease to cure himself of sudden cramp, symbiotic pedaling brace of peloton or pumphouse song in chute libation flick, dividing current avian. A dragging phylum, scooting sideways, spied by tundra, polished him off with a scoop of kookaburra enclave fizz and peanut fleece constabulary. All for less than the price of a good parakeet.

"Nod an utter amp!" you yell, sallow-cheeked checkerboard co-opted to seize a poor bedraggled rubric. Ole Abracadabra himself jacks up round of gnawing chum, slipping eyeball washboard sag, cleaving birthright snorkel tube from oceanic tribal hump, sidereal menagerie to garden flock of pelican. Backed by ably pluperfect skies, breezy, bifurcated, and belated, he panders to only the cloud top alias of pure uncharted aria.

Just when it looks like our friend the buffalo might make it out alive, foveal disgrace descends from con men, scanning the swirling planet for sanguinity, perspectival jelly, multitudinous rodeo comportment, salsa on wheels, reproductive platform news. Their prefab kingdom, portable toilets not included, for a pairing of genes, plundered chromium, zonal aerosol, propped-up shirkers on any corner, blue light spaceship burger steals; eyesore cutlet laser squeals from bison, bicentennial believers, plops of human gelatin, calamitous roller coaster shown genetic highway offramp augury to exit left remainder reindeer inner product pageant stuck in basement watchword cook-alike. Shingles endow planes within farmed wick of each serrated welder's torch, blue-hot to the stork's flighty yet ignoble parasymphathetic itch.

Blue-Fingered Rhapsody

Au contraire, contrarian éclair! Equestrian polarity accumulates invariably in fairy tale temerity, in dog-eared tomes and tombstone knells from undercover swimsuit cons. O Caesarian ovaries, in overture, in overhauled left-handedness, pipe a scream of unborn youth to anchored steamboat, arboretum battleship, or castigated nevermore in whip-poor-will to ancient test of mental bobcat, pinching skylight emblem into looping alley consequential, flooding planar mob with nude enamel filigree.

Conquest team to tied penumbral oceanic status quip, fluted groom on many hits of omen, augury to windmill spin, rolling indignation pride, simpers in predominating slight, capped beyond a wave of germinating beef. Aha! Alas! Avast, ye mighty figurine, striding brow line savagery, above below beside denuded plumes of withered corduroy, soaked in yardarm glue. America! High chimerical alchemy, frozen neural imposter afloat in ecstasy on pollen bee bicuspid bricks atop an exponential sag.

My cap falls off and sails downstream at fine velocity, reproaching pound of sheet rock vapid oddity, idiosyncratic euphony, hierarchical ignominy, and freeform juicy polity; all to limpid angle yolk. Chi-squared area, a merry aria, how fed on graceful slop, and ground to bootstrap comet seizure, sleek in octopi or cosmic seasick altitude bemoaning four-door rodeo in exclamation. Sly periscope, chiding halftime urge allows incendiary grimace to evolve in sloping parenthetical, encasing kickoff steeds in lucid bronze, beautifying the shower, crinkling frayed bowers, stinging crepe hours. Pulleys eye the apex, the nadir, throbbing automatic steeples drawing into worship range, jettison the lifelong crew, lifeboat iceberg isotope, swearing off blue-fingered rhapsody.

Milky Skies

Not that I meant what I said or said what I meant to say or was ill-advised by someone or other or was not advised at all (as old men shuffle by) and not only that, but what if the world suddenly dropped away let's say yesterday or the day before that and nobody noticed it or if there was a big crack in the world and millions of people, women and men and little children died, fell into the crack, women and men and little babies screaming for their mothers; no, that's too vivid, too real, and really without foundation. But what if somebody just by accident broke a small old-fashioned wooden globe of the world with everything all wrong: continents that were misshapen and also rivers and oceans and mountains that were geographically incorrect; anyway he or she dropped it and it hit the wooden floor with a loud crash and it made a big crack in the wooden globe, but nobody actually fell into the crack and died, how about that, huh? Did you ever think about something like that when, for instance, you were crunching down on your hamburger or hot dog? In other words, we're talking about the physical facts of life as we know and understand them, whether living under a blue or milky sky (and believe me, we have plenty of milky skies around here) and another thing, they tell me it is always hot in the Virgin Islands, you don't get any seasons there.

Another thing, did you ever travel in a car where you were surrounded by woods on both sides of the road and it didn't matter whether you were driving the car or you were a passenger in, say, the front seat and you imagined that you saw people, either a man or a woman, out there in the woods as you were passing by? Maybe they were staring back at you or maybe they were just looking straight ahead as they walked. I've imagined that kind of thing myself quite a few times and also there was no sound to be heard except maybe the people heard the sound of the wind in the trees, but you, in your closed-in car couldn't hear that sound, but you *could* see the effects of it: the trees moving back and forth, back and forth in the breeze.

I've also imagined Native Americans who lived maybe two hundred years ago, moving silently through the woods, parallel to the car's direction. Maybe they were half naked or in tan colored buckskin clothing. They never looked in my direction. Not once. They walked carefully along, trying not to trip, going somewhere, who knows where, just minding their own business.

Colleen Woods

untitled 1

we need a new room to imagine this scene in a teabag stretches to three cups
 reverse cycle cocooned & the gutters need cleaning when it
 rains they waterfall water hits a chair hard it's like an art installation
 expensive to entertain with a keen edge of distraction we're watching
 the wrists on television again there's some notion of drift & fall
 bodies in a warm bath making love leaves matching the green of a
 dress what might make it beyond fatigue light of those hours gone
 now so catalogue the clouds make a museum of nests
 tend to another's body like a garden count teeth in photographs in that
 movie a fountain in a courtyard in a building in a desert an instrument for hearing
 water in a dry place where bodies long for the sound of water its impact
 attend to it your worlding practice
 let it develop rapidly and unevenly shake it off like a thesis allow
 tactical slices through grid-forms a wall of water sends an early afternoon sky
 night-dark remember you are a writing exercise now write what you see

untitled 2

a woman mistaking silence for depth a page full of stars a portrait
of a woman standing between drawers filled with birds *this hotel room is bigger
than our house* vague pieces of film a picture of a deer an orange some
pegs a cat hellebore green instant nostalgia a prurient
question about the 'truth' of a poem moon through a eucalypt a refusal of the
network aesthetic hush lean & bloodless & contained post-geographic
& glyphosate cool a magazine says *decorate with love* everything
reduces to thumb grinding palm an amber room a pear-shaped woman lists
of suburbs to hang on your wall the politics of gift giving *the quiet*
here you wouldn't believe it carbon paper blue dripping down walls your keys
resting on a book a dry clock fountain conversation bubbling in the
quiet carriage such good machines your coterie listening to the phone ring
through the house a name is not a link in the city people shopping sniffing
the air like dogs after rain a presence registers as tension an ache in
the jaw recording what is seen on post-its a precise tenderness the fear
of repetition a small kindness is stretched that you might compose a garden
the privilege of that composition acts of receptivity hagiography of a dog the
café flickers unbearably shirts in bright colours are ordered a decision is made
to disclose what the body does autumn arrives moving the chairs around
the yard chasing the sun the reprieve of it its resonance

3

i write
the sky.

a critic
of exhaustion,

the army
provides no peace

though ink
trouble the blood.

4

a design
of obligation,

her hand
upon the truth

of longing.
"know my body

is a promise."
there are clouds

in lightless
sky.

the desolation fires
are ill tended,

my limb
of morning light.

5

more bullets...

...twisted river

vulture perched on chest...

a musket was so violently thrashed

7

a handful of eye

under

scalp.

away,

the

tearing

cloth.

a newborn

sigh

filling

with

rock.

unfurled

widening

a fragment

of fist.

Michael Prihoda writes: "These poems are redactions from Geraldine Brooks' *March*, and the page the text comes from is the title of each poem.

Twilight Zone Reboot

you're looking at [Plainview] Connecticut
population [8,000] a town of [ballparks]
[soda shops] and [white church steeples]
but as the people of [Plainview] are about
to discover their [Main Street] is but
another road into

<The Twilight Zone>

"What if nobody knows we're here?"
asks [Johnny] the disappearing veteran
looking over a row of closed doors [papered]
over in [NO TRESPASSING] signs
before a ghost parade of shopkeepers
their stores [folded] and [sold] the bank
[consolidated] into an [ATM] its stony
fortress now a [used record store] fronting
the street that vanished when the [Walmart]
went up and they bulldozed the [lakeshore]
and leveled [Danny's Diner] when the [movie]
was raised to make way for the [Cineplex]
which is now boarded up because everyone
uses [phones] and [devices] to watch their shows
and every [click] is [captured] in cloud-based
[data] making lists of [shows] they will like
[songs] they will sing [news] they will consume
and [jokes] they will [get] even these lines
of seeming [dissent] coded and [tagged]
with [brackets] to conjure up a sort of whimsy
[if you will] something only a human would do
but how do you know [this] isn't the work
of a meme consuming machine making
all the [AI] calculations in the cyberspace
reaches of

<The Twilight Zone> [!]

Boy in a Black T-Shirt

I'm not afraid of [my
name] I'm not afraid of
[my footsteps walking]
I'm not afraid of [my
skin] I'm not afraid of
[my chain] I'm not
afraid of [the streetlight
corners] I'm not afraid
of [the cops] I'm not
afraid of [the tracks]
I'm not afraid of [the
yards] I'm not afraid of
[my mother's husband]
I'm not afraid of [the
school] I'm not afraid of
[the park] I'm not afraid
of [the things they're
saying] I'm not afraid of
[the bricks] I'm not
afraid of [the stones]
I'm not afraid of [the
broken pavement] I'm
not afraid of [my
hands] I'm not afraid of
[my blood] I'm not
afraid of [the town] I'm
not afraid of [the
streets I stand on]

Sex and its Discontents

the best metaphor for <sex> is sex
the <dream [state]> of <skin [coiling]>
and <re-[calling]> those <air [conditioned]>
[hours] of our [Route 50 <McSleep>]
swaddled in the <company picnic [rapture]>
of another [Sunday <nighter>] happily
<humping [along]> into our [post-coital]
future [satisfied] like a lion rolling over
to <slaughter [his cubs]> or the way
a Columbia River grizzly will <swallow [whole]>
another fattened salmon or a <portly [king]>
will decree the death of all first born males
<answering [the call]> of <DNA>
like an angel ascending the <double [helix]>
ladder or an <unwitting [Abraham]>
and a God with one commandment:
<[copy] [copy]> ◇◇◇◇◇ <[copy] >
my [workshop] says we don't [write]
enough about <sex> like [that night]
on the three legged stool [that day]
you walked in after work [that morning]
you aroused me so fast <making [me]>
have to [think] "Wittgenstein, Ludwig"

Audio Tour of a Box

[we welcome you] [to this audio tour] [and hope] [you find it] [interesting]
[and] [informative] [the box] [you see] [in front of you] [has survived]
[largely because of its] [uniform sides] [giving the box] [a superior shape]
[but don't let its smooth skin] [fool you] [the edges are sharp] [and
extremely lethal] [boxes come] [in various colors] [making it easy] [for
them to form groups] [and take sides] [despite the fact] [that they are all]
[essentially] [the same shape] [but with only four sides] [it is difficult] [for
the box] [to have a more] [complete] [point of view] [although some boxes]
[have been found] [to be compatible with] [differing shapes] [or colors]
[generally] [you'll see a hardening] [of the edges] [as it closes up] [and
stiffens all four surfaces] [it's one] [of the oldest survival tools] [of boxes]
[and this need to retain its shape] [means that can be] [stacked] [into
compliant] [rows] [and columns] [when confronted] [by a perceived
enemy] [so let's go inside the box] [where we see an array] [of internal
boxes] [these help maintain] [the shape of the outer box] [while often
retaining] [the dents and bruises] [of past breaches] [and helping] [the host
box] [maintain] [its solid] [geometric] [walls] [keeping the interior]
[hidden] [at all costs] [that's the story of the box] [there's more than meets
the eye] [we hope you have enjoyed] [our audio tour] [please visit the gift
shop] [where you can try out] [an actual working] [box] [of your own]

Claw foot

Smelling of iron / cold
to the shoulder / The times
we made alien hairstyles with
shampoo / our slippery child-bodies /
and easy laughter / Deep within the
house an absent space dedicated
to water / like the Romans /
To lie like an emperor for an hour.

They say we made it up

and I ask Why separate ourselves
from the herd? Why divide?

Paint ourselves outcast white and wait
to be picked off.

Why would we make ourselves the wolf
with one blue eye to unnerve

enough to snarl and lash. Hiss out
into the dark of the forest.

The Door

And I wonder if there will be people who'll help me.
Like asking for directions in a strange city or like
finding the Family Room along identical hospital corridors.
The door is a veil to a new life. I've seen people
ignore bodies lined in doorways. I don't think the nurses
will be kind. The strangers. I wonder about comfort.
Like one of those apertures where you can only go through
not back. A fishhook in your finger.

